

**A SURVEY OF THE FUNDAMENTAL MOTIFS OF
DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S ETHICS AND THEIR
LIMITATIONS: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
HIS IMPORTANCE TO THE CHURCH IN JAPAN**

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HIROKI FUNAMOTO



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CERTIFICATE

I certify that Hiroki Funamoto has fulfilled the conditions of the resolution of the University Court, 1967, No. 1, and that he is qualified to submit this thesis in application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

.....

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by myself, that it is my own composition and that it has not previously been presented for a higher degree. The research was carried out at the University of St. Andrews under the supervision of Lecturer Michael Keeling.

.....

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INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of man's salvation "sola fide",--by grace through faith alone--has since the sixteenth century Reformation received strong affirmation in large sections of Protestantism as the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae. This doctrine has, no doubt, played a very significant role both historically and theologically.

It may, however, also have been misunderstood as involving a certain tendency to neglect man's act, being open to the danger of libertinism and antinomianism on the one hand and ethical legalism on the other.

A careful investigation is in order, as an attempt to throw some light on these problems. This is always of great importance to the church everywhere, but seems to me to be especially relevant in view of the situation of the church in Japan.

From this angle, I have already undertaken investigations into the theology of the New Testament and of the Reformers. The results of that study were published as articles in "Shingaku Kenkyu" (Theological Studies; Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan) under the titles of "A Study of Faith and Act--with special reference to the relation between Romans 4 and James 2--" 1962 and "A Study of Justification and Sanctification in Luther's Lectures on Romans" 1965.

Since that time I have felt keenly the necessity of an investigation of contemporary theologians on this point.

It seems to me that Dietrich Bonhoeffer is one of the most notable theologians in this context. As Eberhard Bethge used the sub-title, "Theologian: Christian: Contemporary", to his monumental work on Bonhoeffer's biography, so Bonhoeffer may be regarded as one who lived as a contemporary man with Christian faith.

It may be said that Bonhoeffer's thought can be understood only in the light of his own remarkable personal life and the background of the times in which he lived. Though he grew up in the relative stability and security of a German bourgeois home with a fine family and cultural background that he greatly treasured, his writings spring from the period of the growing crisis of the 1930's in Germany with the rise of Hitler to power. He was very much aware of the world revolutionary change of life taking place in his generation of which the situation in Germany was but one dramatic example.

In the letter to his parents of 20th February, 1944 he says:

Our generation cannot now lay claim to such a life as was possible in yours- a life that can find its full scope in professional and personal activities, and achieve balance and fulfilment. That's perhaps the greatest sacrifice that we younger people, with the example of your life still before our eyes, are called on and compelled to make, and it makes us particularly aware of the fragmentary and

incomplete nature of our own. (1)

Perhaps this personal experience led him to his acute and realistic analysis of the modern non-religious, self-sufficient world. It was an analysis which is particularly relevant to our times and is one of his major contributions to the contemporary theological thought.

The clue to Bonhoeffer is the Christocentric focus of his thought, that is, his constant reference to Jesus Christ who is at once the Incarnate, the Crucified, and the Risen One. Furthermore, Bonhoeffer quite simply and clearly called the church to new obedience to the commandment of Jesus Christ. He was not afraid to speak of good works and was much concerned with the problem of worldly responsibility, but he did so on the basis of a sound evangelical theology.

Bonhoeffer's conception of worldly Christianity is helping the church to gain a new understanding on the relation between God and the world.

The name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer has been famous in Japan since the beginning of the 1960's. Shinkyō Shuppansha (Protestant Publishing Company), the largest Christian Publishing Company in Japan, has published Japanese translations of almost all of his main works.

1) Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 215.

They consist of nine volumes and have been read widely among ministers, theologians and Christian students.

It seems to me that there are two reasons why Bonhoeffer's name has become famous in Japan. Firstly, his own life as a martyr against the Nazis has been seriously received by many Japanese Christians, because during the Second World War the greater part of the Christians in Japan, with a few exceptions, took an equivocal attitude towards the militaristic government. It may be said, therefore, that a deep feeling of repentance of Japanese Christians lies at the heart of this lionizing of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In connection with this tendency, Bonhoeffer's famous words that were written in his letter to Reinhold Niebuhr: "I have come to the conclusion that I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people..."² are very often quoted by many preachers and theologians.

Secondly, even though this aspect lags far behind the first, his theological and ethical insight is

2) Quoted by R. Niebuhr in "The Death of a Martyr" Christianity and Crisis vol. V, no.II, p. 6.

gradually being paid attention to by Christian leaders. They have found here one of the clues in solving some of the problems of the Church in Japan. I agree that Bonhoeffer must be taken seriously, not only as a martyr, but also as a theologian of consequence.

Many books and articles on Bonhoeffer have been published already, and it may be true to say that "the interesting thing about studying Dietrich Bonhoeffer is that it is impossible to follow him, to become his disciple."³

Though Bonhoeffer was Germany's most promising young theologian, his life was too short. At the age of thirty, he was barred from his academic post; when he was thirty-four, the pulpit was closed to him; at thirty-five, written publication was forbidden; by his imprisonment at thirty-seven, even conversation with his friends or colleagues was denied him; and at thirty-nine, he was executed by Hitler.

In spite of his short life and the incompleteness of his works, his influence has spread throughout the Christian world, largely due to the impact of his posthumously published letters and papers from prison.

It is not easy to understand the thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This is because of two factors: First,

3) W. Hamilton: "Bonhoeffer; Christology and Ethics United," Christianity and Crisis, vol. XXIV, p. 195.

his thinking was largely of an exploratory nature, unfinished and unsystematized and cannot be easily classified or categorized into one theological school or position. Second, there is little permanent record of his thought. Even his major book which he considered his chief lifetime work, Ethics, is incomplete and in fragmentary form.

Therefore, unfortunately it cannot be denied that there are many misunderstandings or distortions about his thinking. His ideas have been made into theological catch-phrases and have been used apart from his original intention. It seems that there has been a certain tendency to pay too much attention to his letters from prison, to understand him only from them, and not from the whole context of his works.

A careful research into Bonhoeffer's ethics is still of value, and such an investigation will give some light on our difficult but important contemporary problems.

There is firm continuity in his thought, but one must trace the development in Bonhoeffer's theological thinking. This has to be kept in mind in considering his works. Consequently, this study will be confined to Bonhoeffer's Ethics. Because the kernel of his thought is to be found here, it is a good and sufficient source for an investigation.

This study will be divided into five parts.

In the first part, an introductory survey of Dietrich Bonhoeffer will be attempted.

In the second part, the significance and themes of his Ethics will be discussed.

The third part, the centre of this thesis, will survey the fundamental motifs of Bonhoeffer's Ethics.

The fourth part, will try to evaluate and give a critique of his Ethics.

The final part, will make special reference to his importance to the church in Japan.

CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF SURVEY OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S CAREER AND THOUGHT

As has been mentioned in the Introduction, Bonhoeffer's thought can be properly understood only in the light of the events of his own life and the background of the times in which he lived. Therefore, to begin an investigation with a brief sketch of his life may be helpful for an understanding of the development of his theological and ethical thinking.

It is fortunate that there is a remarkable biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer written by his close friend Eberhard Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Contemporary, published in 1967 in German and in 1970 in the English translation. In this book Bethge divided Bonhoeffer's life into three periods.

First period: "The Lure of Theology" (1906 -- 1931)

Second period: "The Cost of Being a Christian" (1931--1940)

Third period: "Sharing Germany's Destiny" (1940--1945)

The first period covers the time from Bonhoeffer's birth to his return from study abroad at Union Theological Seminary in New York, during which he had been engaged in studying and in teaching theology.

The next period extends to the outbreak of the Second World War. During this time he served as a minister of the Confessing Church and also as a leader

of ecumenical movement.

This was followed by active political years when Bonhoeffer joined positively in the movement of resistance to Hitler.

It is also interesting to divide his work theologically. These periods might be called the dogmatic, the exegetical and the ethical; or periods of foundation, concentration, and liberation.¹

And each period has two main works.

The first period: Sanctorum Communio and Act and Being.

The second period: The Cost of Discipleship and Life Together.

The third period: Ethics and Letters and Papers from Prison.

During the first period his thought centered on "Jesus Christ as the revelational reality of the Church." During the second period his emphasis was upon "Jesus Christ as the Lord over the Church." In the third period Bonhoeffer concentrated his attention upon "Jesus Christ as the Lord over the world."²

This difference can be seen as an expansion or

1) E. Bethge: "The Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life and Theology" in World Come of Age, ed. by R.G. Smith, p. 25.

2) J.D. Godsey: The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 266.

development of Bonhoeffer's Christological understanding. Therefore the striking contrast between his original emphasis on the church and his final emphasis on the world is not to be regarded as a break in his theology, but as the two poles of the development of his Christocentric thinking.

The first period (1906-1931)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German, born in Breslau (now Wroclaw in Poland, but formerly the Schlesien Province of Germany) on the 4th of February, 1906. He and his twin sister, Sabina, were the sixth and seventh children in a family of eight. His family was a cultured, upper-middle-class family with a Lutheran heritage.

His father, Karl Ludwig Bonhoeffer, was a well known physician and authority on psychiatry and neurology who became a professor at the University of Berlin in 1912.

His mother, the former Paula von Hase, was the daughter of a chaplain to the emperor and her grandfather was the distinguished nineteenth-century ecclesiastical historian, Karl von Hase.

Of his three elder brothers, Karl Friedrich was a brilliant physicist, Walter an expert on the forest and its creatures, and Klaus became a lawyer.

In 1912 the family moved to Berlin, where the father occupied the chair of psychiatry, and went to live in

the attractive residential district of Grunewald. Adolf von Harnack and Hans Delbrueck were close neighbours and great friends of the Bonhoeffer family.

Bonhoeffer enjoyed the advantages of Germany's finest cultural and liberal tradition.. "Bonhoeffer appreciated all that his family provided in the way of balance, self-control, and respect for truth -- a family that emphasized hard work and respect for each member's personality, but also a family that made music together, entered enthusiastically into sports and organized lively festivals among the neighbours."³

According to Godsey, the characteristics of Bonhoeffer as a boy, which played a perceptible role at every point in his career, were: a remarkable vitality, an unusually sensitive nature, and a capacity for turning thought into action.⁴

At the age of fourteen Bonhoeffer decided to study theology. It seems that this decision surprised his family and those who knew him. Later, his father confided his thoughts about Bonhoeffer's decision saying: "At the time when you decided to devote yourself to theology I sometimes thought to myself that a quiet, uneventful minister's life, as I knew it from that of

3) A. Dumas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer; Theologian of Reality, p. 39.

4) J.D. Godsey: The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 20.

my Swabian uncles and as Moerike describes it, would really almost be a pity for you."⁵

Bonhoeffer entered Tuebingen University to begin his theological studies in the autumn of 1923. Here he was influenced by Adolf Schlatter, Wilhelm HeitmueLLer, Karl Heim, Karl Groos and others.

The following year, however, after three months of travel in Rome and North Africa, Bonhoeffer matriculated at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Berlin, and completed his theological education there. In those days the Faculty of Theology of Berlin had the world's foremost scholars: Adolf von Harnack, Adolf Deissmann, Ernst Sellin, Hans Lietzmann, and two exponents of what was then called the "Luther renaissance," with whom Bonhoeffer worked most closely, Karl Holl and Reinhold Seeberg.

Adolf von Harnack estimated Bonhoeffer's ability highly and tried to persuade him to specialize in church history. Bonhoeffer also retained a lifelong respect for Harnack and it was one of his books that he was reading in the prison at the end of his life.

But Bonhoeffer's interest gradually turned towards systematic theology and for this he worked under the guidance of Reinhold Seeberg. He wrote for him such

5) Letter of 2nd February, 1934, quoted by E. Bethge: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, pp. 22f.

essays as "Laesst sich eine historische und pneumatische Auslegung der Schrift unterscheiden, und wie stellt sich die Dogmatik hierzu?" (Can a historical and pneumatological interpretation of Scripture be differentiated, and how does this relate to dogmatics?), "Vernunft und Offenbarung in der alt-lutherischen Dogmatik" (Reason and revelation in early Lutheran dogmatics), "Kirche und Eschatologie" (Church and eschatology), "Die Lehre der altprotestantischen Dogmatik vom Leben nach dem Tode und letzten Dingen" (The teaching of early Protestant dogmatics on life after death and last things), "Franks Anschauungen vom Geist und von der Gnade dargestellt nach dem System der christlichen Gewissheit und dem System der christlichen Wahrheit" (Frank's view of the spirit and of grace according to the system of Christian certainty and system of Christian truth).

In 1927, at the age of only twenty-one, Bonhoeffer submitted to the faculty of theology his dissertation, entitled "Sanctorum Communio: Eine dogmatische Untersuchung zur Soziologie der Kirche" (The Communion of Saints: dogmatic inquiry into the sociology of the Church).⁶

Bonhoeffer was influenced much by Adolf Schlatter

6) The first of the six books that constitute Bonhoeffer's life work, originally published in 1930, as number twenty-six of the series Neue Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche, edited by R. Seeberg. In 1954 it was re-published as vol. 3 in the Theologische Bucherei series published by Kaiser Verlag.

at Tuebingen and Adolf von Harnack and Reinhold Seeberg at Berlin. But the greatest influence upon him was some one he had never heard lecture and had no direct acquaintance with until June, 1931-- Karl Barth. Barth's influence upon Bonhoeffer can be detected in the fact that Bonhoeffer put Christology at the heart of the entire theological enterprise, and this was the decisive emphasis in which the liberal tradition that trained him was defective.

"Sanctorum Communio" was a notable work which dealt with the structure of the Church. The influence of Barth can be traced in it. Barth also recognised his disciple in this work. It is said that he described it as "a theological miracle".⁷ He wrote in his Church Dogmatics as follows: "... this dissertation which gains our deepest respect in the breadth and depth of its vision: not only for its relation to the time when it was written but also because even now it can instruct, stimulate, illuminate and edify, far more than many more famous works about the problem of the church which have come out since... I admit that I myself have difficulty in keeping up the standard which Bonhoeffer set in those days..."⁸

7) J. D. Godsey: The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 21.

8) K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, IV/2, p. 725.

Ernst Wolf comments on this book in the preface to the second edition, as "probably the most discerning and perhaps the most profound handling of the question about the real structure of the church."

The doctrine of the church was the starting point of Bonhoeffer's theological thinking and it is the main interest through-out his life. His theme was the church in which Christ works.⁹

Bonhoeffer's thinking about the church starts with the real presence of Christ. The Church is the place where Jesus Christ is present. Therefore those who are in the Church are in Christ. "A man who is not in the church does not live in communion with Christ; but a man who is in Christ is in both the perfected and the actualised Church."¹⁰

He then attempts an investigation of the social structure of the "Sanctorum Communio," in which the insights of social philosophy, with its fundamental interest in human sociality, and sociology, with its systematic interest in the structure of empirical communities, are made fruitful for Christian dogmatic thinking about the concept of the Church.¹¹ This

9) See Christoph von Hase: "Begriff und Wirklichkeit der Theologie Bonhoeffers", Die Muendige Welt, I, s. 26.

10) D. Bonhoeffer: Sanctorum Communio, p.116.

11) J. D. Godsey: The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 27.

attitude towards aligning the concepts of sociology and social philosophy with the revelation of Christ shows us the direction of the development of his theology.

In 1928, Bonhoeffer became vicar of a German-speaking church in Barcelona, Spain. Returning to Berlin in February 1929, he became assistant to Professor Wilhelm Lutgert in systematic theology, and worked on his Habilitationsschrift, which is required before one can be admitted to teach in a theological faculty in Germany. This work, the second book in his first period, entitled Akt und Sein: Transzendentalphilosophie und Ontologie in der systematischen Theologie (Act and Being: transcendental philosophy and ontology in systematic theology), was accepted by the University of Berlin in 1930 and won for him a position as Privatdozent in systematic theology. On 31st July, 1930 Bonhoeffer gave an inaugural lecture on the topic "Die Frage nach dem Menschen in der gegenwaertigen Philosophie und Theologie" ("Man in contemporary philosophy and theology").

Before taking up teaching duties, however, he spent the academic year 1930--1931 as a student at Union Theological Seminary in New York. His stay in America was a stimulating one, due to many discussions and discoveries. He was passionately interested in becoming

acquainted with and understanding this new world and its religious life. He tried eagerly to get in touch with the Black church and community. He also made the acquaintance of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Lehmann.

After his second trip to the United States in the summer of 1939, he wrote an essay entitled "Protestantismus ohne Reformation" (Protestantism without Reformation).¹² Here we can see his reflections on America. In his essay he offered an evaluation of the secularity of the state and its clear separation from the church, the vitality of the denominations, the church's sense of social responsibility, the openness of everyone to personal questions, the practical ecumenism on the American scene, and the agreements that were possible on many issues without pompousness or bathos. At the same time, however, he feared for the truth when it became so vague and sentimental, and for a church that could so easily be transformed into a social club without theological vigour or even the need for any commitment of faith. For him American Christianity is quite different from German or European Christianity, where doctrinal precision was all-important, but where the experience of the communion of saints

12) UNTERWEGS, Heft I, 1949, pp. 3-17, reprinted in Gesammelte Schriften I, 1958, München, pp. 323-354.

was losing ground.¹³

The second period (1931-1940) began with his return to Germany.

On 1st August, 1931 Bonhoeffer commenced teaching in the theological faculty of the University of Berlin. But his work was not limited to academic circles. He became chaplain at the Technical College in the Charlottenburg district of Berlin, where his preaching services were crowded. He also took charge of a confirmation class of fifty boys in a slum area in the North Berlin district of Wedding using a new catechism which was written by him in co-operation with Franz Hildebrandt -- Glaubst Du, so hast du. Versuch eines Lutherischen Katechismus. (If you believe, you have. An experiment of Lutheran Catechism). On 11th November 1931, he was ordained a pastor.

In addition to these pastoral duties he accepted the post of youth secretary to an ecumenical organization, "The World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship Through the Churches". He took responsibility for Germany and central Europe as one of three youth secretaries, and became a regular participant in its conferences, at Cambridge in 1931, in Czechoslovakia in July 1932, in Geneva and Gland in August 1932.

13) A. Dumas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian of Reality, pp. 46-47.

and Sofia in September 1933. He engaged energetically in the ecumenical — interconfessional and international — movements and this dimension became increasingly important from the moment that Nazism began to isolate Germany and the German Church from the rest of the world.

All this time he was teaching in the theological faculty and his lectures and seminars covered a wide range of topics, including: "The History of Systematic Theology in the Twentieth century", "The Concept of Philosophy and Protestant Theology", "The Nature of the Church, "Is There a Christian Ethic?", "Creation and Sin; A Theological Exegesis of Genesis 1--3", and "Modern Theological Literature". Of These, "Creation and Sin" was later published, at the request of his students, in book form as Creation and Fall.

In those days, that is, the beginning of the 1930's, Germany was going through its fateful turning from the Weimar Republic to the National Socialist's seizure of power, and German Protestantism was entering the crisis of totalitarian conformity and the whole struggle of the Confessing Church.¹⁴

In the election of 14th September 1930, the Nazis increased the number of their deputies in the Reichstag from 12 to 107. In the 1932 election (July 31) the Nazis

14) A. Dumas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theologian of Reality, p. 50.

captured 230 seats and became the strongest party in the Government. On 30th January 1933, Adolf Hitler was installed as Chancellor of the Third German Reich, and on 27th February the Reichstag was burned.

In the church as well, event followed event with increasing speed. The "German Christians", who supported the "positive Christianity" and the anti-Jewish efforts recommended by Hitler, almost gained a majority of seats in the November 1932 regional elections of the church to which Bonhoeffer belonged. They triumphed in the General Church Election of 23rd July 1933, getting 70 per cent of the vote. The "Fuehrer-principle" was applied to the church in the person of the military chaplain Ludwig Mueller who was named Bishop of Prussia on 13th July, and was elected Reichbishop at the National Synod of Wittenberg on 27th September.

At the same time, however, an opposition movement began to grow within the church. Dumas notes several movements: the pastors's confessional statement at Altona (inspired by Hans Asmussen) dates from 11th January 1933; the letter of warning from Bishop Dibelius to his pastors from 8th March; the publication of Karl Barth's Theologische Existenz Heute from 25th June; the clear condemnation of the "Aryan clause" by the Faculty of Theology at Marburg from 20th September; and the formation of the Pastors' Emergency League under

Niemoeller from 21st September, with the convening of its Council of Brethren on 20th October.¹⁵

Bonhoeffer aligned himself solidly with this evangelical opposition. Two days after Hitler became Chancellor, Bonhoeffer gave a lecture on the radio entitled "Wandlungen des Fuehrerbegriffes in der jungen Generation" (Changes in the conception of the leader in the younger generation), in which he pointed out the dangers of idolization of a human leader. But the broadcast was cut off the air by the authorities before its conclusion. He developed the theme even more fully in a lecture given at the German High School for Politics in March 1933, and in it we can see the idea of "mandate" that was later developed in Ethics.

In October 1933 he went to London to work as a pastor of two German parishes. Bonhoeffer had several reasons for leaving Germany and in effect he was far more useful to the Confessing Church in London, where he was free to speak and see people, than he could possibly have been in Berlin. As it is widely known, however, Barth opposed his move and accused him of running away into the backwater of German church life. He wrote: "... I can honestly not tell you anything but

15) A. Dumas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer; Theologian of Reality, p. 51.

'hurry back to your post in Berlin!'... No, to all the reasons or excuses which you might perhaps still be able to put in front me, I will give only one answer: 'and the German church?'¹⁶ Bonhoeffer did not reply, and he did not return to Germany although he might have had inner conflicts about doing so.

He was intent on doing pastoral work. During this time he made up his mind to go forwards as a minister rather than as a theologian. His concerns had shifted gradually from systematic theology to theological exegesis of the Bible and Christian ethics.

In 1934, the Confessing Church was first clearly organised taking its name from a Declaration or Confession written in May of that year in Barmen. Bonhoeffer played a major role in the Barmen Conference and in the writing of the Barmen Declaration, which became the theological sheet anchor of the resistance.

Through his acquaintance with C. F. Andrews, Gandhi's friend and biographer, Bonhoeffer became interested in Gandhi's non-violent method of pacifism. He envisaged a trip to India and even got an introduction from the bishop of Chichester, G.K.A. Bell with whom he kept firm contacts throughout the remainder of his life.

16) See No Rusty Swords, pp. 237-240.

But meanwhile a call came from the Confessing Church to return and take over the leadership of an illegal seminary for training vicars of the Confessing Church in Pomerania. On 26th April, 1935, he met twenty-five young ministers, all of whom intended to serve parishes in the Confessing Church, at Zingst on the Baltic Sea. Soon thereafter, however, he moved the seminary to Finkenwalde near Stettin.

One of his students was Eberhard Bethge, who became his assistant and, after his death, was to become his biographer and editor of his writings. In 1936 Bonhoeffer's authority to teach was withdrawn by German officials, and the seminary was closed by order of Himmler in 1937; but it continued underground until 1940. Bonhoeffer called this community the "Bruderhaus" (House of Brothers), where he experimented with a form of Protestant monasticism. Their life was divided between theological work, spiritual discipline, enjoyment of nature, friendship, and service to nearby parishes. His experience during this period is contained in the two books: Nachfolge (The Cost of Discipleship) and Gemeinsames Leben (Life Together) which made his name and his thoughts widely known.

Nachfolge appeared in November 1937, a month after Finkenwalde had been closed in the year in which twenty-seven young ministers were arrested.

Bonhoeffer pursued his way of life as a disciple of Jesus Christ, according to the Word of God under the control of Nazism. "What it means to follow Jesus" was the burning question for Bonhoeffer. He insisted: the church is poisoning itself by its use of cheap grace. Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian 'conception' of God. Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

On the contrary, costly grace accompanies a life of discipleship. "Such grace is costly," says Bonhoeffer, "because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life."¹⁷

In this book we can read Bonhoeffer's critique against the German church which easily compromised with the authorities of the state and parted with its conscience of faith. And he strongly insisted that there is only one answer to Jesus's call — single-minded obedience; and that it is only to this obedience that

17) D. Bonhoeffer: The Cost of Discipleship, pp. 35-37.

the promise of fellowship with Jesus is given. We can find nothing except this book which investigates plainly and deeply the relation between grace and obedience.¹⁸

Life Together is a small work which grew out of his two-year experience of living communally with his vicar-students in the Bruderhaus at Finkenwalde. He begins this simple but powerful book with these points: Life in visible community with Christian brethren is not something that can be taken for granted. Like Jesus, who lived in the midst of enemies, Christians live in the midst of the world, dispersed among unbelievers and united only in Christ. When they are permitted to live in visible fellowship with other Christians and to gather visibly to share God's word and sacrament, it must be recognized as the pure grace of God, who allows them the extraordinary, the "rose and lilies" of the Christian life.¹⁹

18) In Church Dogmatics, K. Barth evaluated Bonhoeffer's work highly. "Easily the best that has been written on this subject is to be found in The Cost of Discipleship, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. We do not refer to all the parts, which were obviously compiled from different sources, but to the opening sections, "The Call to Discipleship", "Simple Obedience" and "Discipleship and the Individual." In these the matter is handled with such depth and precision that I am almost tempted simply to reproduce them in an extended quotation. For I cannot hope to say anything better on the subject than what is said here by a man who, having written on discipleship, was ready to achieve it in his own life, and did in his own way achieve it even to the point of death. In following my own course, I am happy that on this occasion I can lean as heavily as I do upon another." (IV/2, pp. 533-534)

19) cf. J.D. Godsey: The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 180.

It seems to me that Bonhoeffer found the weak point of the Protestant church in the lack of discipline of faith in the communal life and also the lack of Bible study in the fellowship. So his ambition was to overcome such weak points through the life in Finkenwalde. Life Together is the beautiful fruit of his conviction.

After the time of the crisis brought about by General Fritsch in February 1939, Bonhoeffer, thanks to his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi, entered into close contact with the centre of the resistance movement to which he belonged during the war, and particularly with Admiral Canaris and General Oster.

In March 1939 Bonhoeffer returned to London to visit his former parish. There he renewed connections with several people in the ecumenical world, notably Bishop Bell, Leonard Hodgson of "Faith and Order", and Visser't Hooft.

It was at this time that Bonhoeffer's friends, Reinhold Niebuhr in particular, undertook to arrange a way out for him that would save him much difficulty. They sent an invitation for a two-year visit to the United States of America and offered him an opportunity to undertake pastoral work, preaching and teaching. He gained permission from the Council of the Confessing Church, acquired the task of maintaining its ecumenical work outside Germany, and set sail for New York on 7th June, 1939.

However, he took one of the last ships and returned to Germany on 7th July, in spite of his close friend Paul Lehmann's persuasion, leaving a famous letter of explanation for Reinhold Niebuhr (quoted in the Introduction, above, page 5). He felt the need for identification with his suffering countrymen.

This was the big turning point of his life. Now his life was divided into two directions (as Bethge puts it "double life")²⁰: One is the task of the Confessing Church, visiting, working on his Ethics; and the other is the task of the resistance movement.

As he had been invited by Dr John Baillie to give the Croall Lectures in Edinburgh in October, he wanted to use this opportunity as the first step for his Ethics. However, the Second World War which began in September with the invasion of Poland obstructed this plan.

The third period (1940--1945) was the time of sharing Germany's destiny.

Bonhoeffer joined the political underground resistance at the highest level, even obtaining a passport from the Intelligence Corps of the Army through his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi. By this means, Bonhoeffer, who was forbidden to speak or publish in Germany, was

20) E. Bethge: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 765.

able to travel throughout Germany and maintain his contacts abroad. His task was now clearly political, even though his essential concern was still theological. He visited Switzerland in 1941 making contact with W. A. Visser't Hooft. In 1942 he met Dr Bell in Sweden and communicated to him the resistance's terms for a German surrender. The rejection by the British Government of this overture meant that there was no alternative for the underground except the assassination of Hitler— a course Bonhoeffer himself had urged — and the result was the unsuccessful bomb plot of July 20, 1944.

A work on ethics was a project Bonhoeffer had envisaged since 1937. He worked on it piecemeal between 1940 and 1943, sometimes in Berlin, sometimes on the estate of Frau von Kleist in Pomerania, and sometimes in the Benedictine abbey at Ettal in Upper Bavaria. The unfinished fragments appeared posthumously as the Ethics in 1949 by the effort of Bethge. We can see his intention in one of his prison letters. He wrote: "I sometimes feel as if my life were more or less over, and as if all I had to do now were to finish my Ethics."²¹

Bonhoeffer was arrested on 5th April 1943. He spent

21) Bonhoeffer's letter of 15th December, 1943.

1. World Come of Age. It is Bonhoeffer's conviction that our world has "come of age", by which he means that the time of "religion" is over. Bonhoeffer writes in his letter of 30th April 1944 that:

The thing that keeps coming back to me is, what is Christianity, and indeed what is Christ, for us today? The time when men could be told everything by means of words, whether theological or simply pious, is over, and so is the time of inwardness and conscience, which is to say the time of religion as such. We are proceeding towards a time of no religion at all: men as they are now simply cannot be religious any more. (22)

Increasingly since the thirteenth century the world has become secular and through the development of science more and more autonomous from religion and the need for God. In art, philosophy, physics, even ethics, God is no longer required as an idea to explain things. "For the last hundred years or so it has been increasingly true of religious questions also; it is becoming evident that everything gets along without God, and just as well as before."²³

The world has become "mature", is aware of the laws that govern its existence, and is confident as it sets about solving concrete daily problems that it has no need for God. This new mature world is not stable, but

22) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 279.

23) op. cit., pp. 325-326.

the first eight months, until 8th October 1944, in the Tegel military prison. During this time he was allowed to write and all the letters to his parents and his friends (chiefly to Bethge), both censored and uncensored, make up the book published under the title "Widerstand und Ergebung" (Letters and Papers from Prison). These letters cover the period from 14th April 1943 to 23rd August 1944. Several other items have been included in addition to the letters. These letters made him famous after the war, particularly those written from 30th April 1944 onwards, in which Bonhoeffer began to speculate about the future of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in a non-religious world come of age.

At this point it is appropriate to attempt a preliminary survey of his fundamental motifs in Letters and Papers from Prison. It seems to me that we can find here important thoughts which are closely connected with the motifs of the Ethics. In Bonhoeffer's thought, the concepts 'Christ--world come of age--religion' form a triangle, in which the definition of each concept is dependent on the definition of the other two. This triangle is strongly related to his primary question--Who is Jesus Christ for us today? It is this context that his observations find their true proportion. Therefore I shall approach his main motifs through the investigation of these characteristic terms.

rather instability and revolution mark its character. Nor does the continual shift to different relative human truths that takes place mean that these principles necessarily become good themselves. This new mature world more and more accepts the relativity of its status though it is true that there is also, especially among intellectuals, a seeking after some new total ideology or religion. On the whole, however, the autonomous development is progressing and even the sphere of the inner and personal life is beginning to show this. For a long time this has been falsely regarded as the sphere of religion: "When God was driven out of the world, and from the public side of human life, an attempt was made to retain him at least in the sphere of the 'personal'".²⁴

Bonhoeffer is convinced that modern man cannot be religious even if he thinks he is and wants to be. If he describes himself as religious, it is obvious that he does not live up to it, or that he means something quite different by it. If religion was no more than a "garment of Christianity," it must now be cast aside because it has lost its meaning in a world which has come of age.

According to Bonhoeffer, most theologians and

24) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 344.

historians (both Roman Catholic and Protestant) recognize this trend to secular self-autonomy in the world, where God is being slowly squeezed out to spheres of borderline concern, but they react to it in different ways. For Bonhoeffer their answers are not adequate. He criticizes them because their attack upon the matured world is pointless, ignoble, and un-Christian. Pointless, because it looks to him like an attempt to put a grown-up man back into adolescence, i.e., to make him dependent on things on which he is not in fact dependent any more, thrusting him back into the midst of problems which are in fact not problems for him any more. Ignoble, because this amounts to an effort to exploit the weakness of man for purposes alien to him and not freely subscribed to by him. Un-Christian, because Christ himself is being substituted for one particular stage in the religiousness of man, i.e., a human law.²⁵

Next, Bonhoeffer criticizes and rejects several main theological approaches to this problem. At the same time, he makes clear his understanding of the main streams in theology, which he divides into four groups.

25) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 327.

First, there is the attempt by some to return to the church heteronomy of the Middle Ages where all spheres of life were dependent upon a tightly knit system that was based on the hypothesis of God. Bonhoeffer's criticism is that this is a counsel of despair, which can be purchased only at the cost of intellectual honesty. We must recognize "that we have to live in the world etsi deus non daretur."²⁶

2) Christian pietism, which Bonhoeffer terms "methodism", offers another approach to the increasingly secularized world. These pietists attempt to clear a place in the world for God by persuading the world that it still needs God to answer its problems and solve its distress and conflicts. This is done by convincing people of their sin and miserable state, showing them their needs and conflicts until they are ready to be sold the goods we have to offer. But, asks Bonhoeffer, "are we to fall upon one or two unhappy people in their weakest moment and force upon them a sort of religious coercion?"²⁷ And what about those who insist that they are not unhappy or miserable, that they can meet their own conflict?

26) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, P. 360.

27) op. cit., p. 280.

"If a man won't see that his happiness is really damnation, his health, sickness, his vigour and vitality despair; if we won't call them what they really are, the theologian is at his wits' end."²⁸ Such a person must be a hopelessly ^abardened sinner or a complacent bourgeois and impossible to save.

Existential philosophy and psychotherapy have both been active in this type of work, says Bonhoeffer. He calls them "secularized methodists"²⁹ and writes "wherever there is health, strength, security, simplicity, they scent luscious fruit to gnaw at or lay their pernicious eggs in."³⁰ Such an approach is foreign to Jesus' teaching and practice. He does not begin by impressing upon men their sinfulness or calling them into sin; he calls them out of their sin. "Never did Jesus question a man's health, vigour or happiness, regarded in themselves, or regard them as evil fruits."³¹

In any case Bonhoeffer feels that this pietist approach with its secular companions really reaches only a few intellectuals who enjoy contemplating their self-estrangement and conflicts. The ordinary working

28) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 341.

29) op. cit., p. 326.

30) op. cit., p. 326.

31) op. cit., p. 341.

man with a family has little time or interest "to concern himself with his existential despair, or to regard his perhaps modest share of happiness as a trial, a trouble, or a calamity."³²

Bonhoeffer believes there is a twofold theological error here: first, the idea that man can be addressed as a sinner only on the basis of his weaknesses; secondly, the notion that man's essential nature consists of his inner life. Jesus did not make every man a sinner first; he called men out of their sin, not into it.

Thus Bonhoeffer insists on taking an entirely different approach to a world come of age, saying: I should like to speak of God not on the borders of life but at its centre, not in man's suffering and death but in his life and prosperity. The church stands not where human powers give out, on the borders, but in the centre of the village. Here we can see Bonhoeffer's positive attitude of faith. He intended to preach Christ in the centre of the society where people are living really and concretely.

3) A third type of Christian apologetic approach to this growing religious autonomy of the world ideas is what Bonhoeffer believes to be really an extension

32) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 327.

of "liberal pietism". Bonhoeffer puts many famous theologians' names in this group, including Karl Heim, Paul Althaus, Paul Tillich, and Rudolf Bultmann. Bonhoeffer presents an amazingly concise and penetrating sketch of these scholars in the letter of 8th June, 1944.³³

Heim sought, along pietist and methodist lines, to convince individual man that he was faced with the alternative "either despair or Jesus."

Althaus endeavoured to write from the world of Lutheran teaching and Lutheran worship, and otherwise left the world to its own devices.

Tillich set out to interpret the evolution of the world-- against its will-- in a religious sense, to give it its whole shape through religion. That was very courageous of him, but the world unseated him and went on by itself: he too sought to understand the world better than it understood itself, but it felt entirely misunderstood, and rejected the imputation.

Bultmann's demythologizing, Bonhoeffer thinks, is also at heart a liberal attempt to reduce the Gospel to its "essence" and it fails to interpret the Bible and the New Testament faith in a "non-religious", that is, a non-metaphysical or non-individualistic sense.

33) cf. D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, pp. 324-329.

For Bonhoeffer it is not the mythological concepts that are problematic, but the "religious" ones, so that in one sense Bultmann did not go far enough.

4) Barth's theology is, according to Bonhoeffer, the most helpful sign of a break away from this "religious" interpretation of the world and the Christian faith. The world is not understood in this theology from the point of view of its own needs and wants but solely from the viewpoint of God's revelation. He calls the God of Jesus Christ into the lists against religion, pneuma against sarx.

But Bonhoeffer criticized Barth in that he was too dominated in a negative way by liberal theology and perhaps as a reaction against it slipped into a "positivism of revelation." His emphasis on dogma and revelation almost made of them a new law for the believer which remained irrelevant for the secular man in everyday situations. Bonhoeffer writes: "he gave no concrete guidance, either in dogmatics or in ethics, on the non-religious interpretation of theological concepts."³⁴ Further, Bonhoeffer criticizes Barth's approach as tending to encourage "us to entrench ourselves persistently behind the 'faith of the Church', and evade the honest question, what is our

34) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 328.

real and personal belief?"³⁵

Now we must move forwards to Bonhoeffer's own opinion. Bonhoeffer attempts to avoid the religious interpretation of both the pietists and apologists while at the same time avoiding Barthian theology.

However, he begins like Barth by directing us to Christ. He starts not with ourselves, or the world with its increasing autonomy and decreasing need for religious answers, but with the divine reality of God who came into the world and reconciled it in Christ. We must not attempt to undermine the maturity of the world and force it to return to a dependence upon religion. It is this actual, mature, non-religious world that God has accepted in Jesus Christ. Indeed in some respects this mature world that rejects God is really closer to Him than the old world which looked in its distress to God and used Him as a deus ex machina:

To that extent we may say that the development towards the world's come of age outlined above, which has done away with a false conception of God, opens up a way of seeing the God of the Bible, who wins power and space in the world by his weakness. (36)

Except for a few years in the time of the New Testament and in the Reformation, Christians have always understood Christ in a religious sense. Today

35) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 382.

36) op. cit., p. 361.

we must once again realize that Christ stands in a different relation to the world. Christ for us today, like the Christ of the New Testament, must be understood in a relation of service and of suffering love.

Ecce homo-- Behold the Man! In Him the world was reconciled with God. "It is not by its overthrowing but by its reconciliation that the world is subdued. (37)

Only in the perfect love of God seen in the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ can reality be confronted and overcome. We are called to confront the autonomous world by participating in this divine reality. Bonhoeffer claims that faith is participation in the Being of Jesus (incarnation, cross and resurrection). Our relation to God is not an absolute religious relationship to a supreme Being, but a new life for others, through participation in the Being of God.

It would be, however, a great mistake to understand Bonhoeffer as abolishing the worshipping church and replacing its service and sacraments with charitable acts. The religionless world in itself is not Christianity. The church must not throw away its great terms such as "creation", "fall", "atonement", "repentance", "last things" and so on. But if she cannot relate them to the secularized world in such a way that their

37) D. Bonhoeffer: Ethics, pp. 51-52.

essence in worldly life can immediately be seen, then the church had better keep silent. Bonhoeffer is not at all reducing the contents of faith, but they become only religious objects if presented without motivation. The adult in faith in a world come of age knows and keeps the living contact with the foundation of his life, he knows and keeps the traditional creeds, he knows and judges the priorities of his own involvement, he faces the claim of the next to him. The adult in faith is he who answers the questions, "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?" in personal, responsible participation in the present life. The mature church in a world come of age is not the church which expresses its secrets of faith cheaply but that which express itself in its very existence. Living for others is its raison d'être.

On these thoughts, Bonhoeffer concludes that

When we speak of God in a 'non-religious' way, we must speak of him in such a way that the godlessness of the world is not in some way concealed, but rather revealed, and thus exposed to an unexpected light. The world that has come of age is more godless, and perhaps for that very reason nearer to God, than the world before its coming of age. (38)

This is no sanctioning of the world's godlessness, but rather a recognition that it is a hopeful godlessness. And Bonhoeffer lived for and served this

38) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 362. (18th July, 1944)

world, this godless world and this world come of age.

2. Religion. Now we must turn our survey to Bonhoeffer's concept of "religion".

Bonhoeffer uses the term "religion" about an activity distinct from "faith", as Barth defined it. In this sense religion means human attempts to reach the beyond, the postulating of a deity in order to get help and protection as required. Bonhoeffer praises Barth in the highest terms for the rejection of religion. Bonhoeffer himself gives in his letters some incidental but guiding definitions of religion. First, religion is "individualism"³⁹ It cultivates individualistic forms of inwardness. It takes the form of asceticism or concepts of conversion which all abandon the world to itself. One cannot force back the world come of age into such individualistic inwardness.

Second, religion is metaphysics.⁴⁰ Its transcendence provides the completion which is felt necessary for this world. God or the godly is the superstructure for being. Thus it secures the escape the religious desire wants to have. Religion inescapably leads into thinking in two realms: reality must be completed by the supernatural. It emphasizes Christianity as the

39) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 286.

40) op. cit., p. 286.

religion of salvation.

Third, religion is the deus ex machina concept.

Here is the decisive difference between Christianity and all religions. Man's religiosity makes him look in his distress to the power of God in the world: God is the deus ex machina. The Bible directs man to God's powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help.
(41)

Fourth, religion is admittedly a province of life, a sector of the whole, more or less interesting, socially and psychologically valuable-- a relic of the past, but still to be looked after by the governmental department for cultural affairs.⁴²

Bonhoeffer now holds that the time for this religion is essentially over. He would not argue that human needs and the skilful handling of them again and again produce successful mass meetings and even enlarge the share of religion in private and public life. But it does not matter, and people who matter do not come into it. The main point Bonhoeffer would make is that Christians themselves give proof every day of this analysis because they are not able to make more out of their religion than a neat little province of their real life.

Bonhoeffer said all this just when one would have thought religion as the other realm could have been the

41) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 361.

42) op. cit., p. 282.

one great help and answer where no human hope was left. But he passed over to those who were too honest to escape in their weakness into a pious corner where mean provinciality of worship insults God's majesty.

But who is Jesus? How is he real for us? Bonhoeffer wants to recheck the doctrinal shape of the churches in order to prove that Christ is precisely not all that. He is the man for others against individualistic inwardness. He is lonely and forsaken without transcendent escape. The time for religion might have gone, but not the time for Jesus Christ.

3. Christ. Now we shall move to his thinking about Christ.

The cohesive and elucidative element in the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is his steadfast concentration upon the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. For him theology is essentially Christology.

Bonhoeffer declares that there is only one ultimate reality, and that is the reality in Jesus Christ. In the person of Christ the reality of God and the reality of the world are united and held together in a "polemical unity," so that in him there is no possibility of partaking in one without the other.

Because both divine and cosmic reality are in Christ, Bonhoeffer called upon the church to cease thinking in terms of two static spheres, e.g., the

"Christian" and the "worldly", the "sacred" and the "secular", the "revelational" and the "rational". On the other hand, the spheres are not to be identified, but their unity in Christ means that the "Christian" is to be found only in the "worldly", the "sacred" only in the "secular". The Christian is not a man of eternal conflict, but sharing in the unity of the spheres in Jesus Christ, he himself becomes an undivided whole. "His worldliness does not divide him from Christ, and his Christianity does not divide him from the world. Belonging wholly to Christ, he stands at the same time wholly in the world."⁴³

It is from this perspective that Bonhoeffer develops his thoughts about the "worldliness" of Christianity. The "worldliness" on which he speaks is not the world's understanding of worldliness, not the "shallow and banal this-worldliness of the enlightened, the busy, the comfortable, or the lascivious,"⁴⁴ but a worldliness deriving from the knowledge of Christ, knowledge in which death and resurrection is ever present. Bonhoeffer's desire is not to "conceal the godlessness of the world in some way," but to "expose it to an unexpected light."⁴⁵

43) D. Bonhoeffer: Ethics, p. 201.

44) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 369.

45) op. cit., p. 362.

Bonhoeffer's polemic against "religious" interpretations of the faith arises precisely because they either diminish God's concern for the world or refuse to recognize Christ's Lordship over the world. That is, religious interpretations, which for Bonhoeffer mean "metaphysical" or "individualistic" interpretations, separate the reality of God from the reality of the world, continue to think in terms of two spheres, and thus deny their unity in Christ.

Now it can be seen why Bonhoeffer could take a positive attitude towards the modern secularized age, which no longer looks to "God" for its answers and therefore is not "religious". By the use of his reason man has gradually discovered the laws by which the world lives. He manages not only science, but also social and political affairs, ethics, and religion; and in the name of intellectual honesty, he no longer uses God as a working hypothesis. Since he has ceased to be religious and since the laws which he has discovered have their origin, goal, and essence in Jesus Christ, today's godless, secular man is ripe for the Christian message that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the world, that the world stands ever before God, the One God who is Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer and who refuses to be a Deus ex machina. This is what Bonhoeffer means when he asserts that the world come of age is nearer

to God than ever before. "So our coming of age" says Bonhoeffer, "leads us to a true recognition of our situation before God."⁴⁶

Von Stauffenberg's attempt on Hitler's life failed on 20th July, 1944. As a result, the Gestapo discovered the files at Zossen on 22nd September, which contained documents on the relationship between the Abwehr and the Allies. On 8th October, Bonhoeffer was transferred to the Gestapo prison on Prinz Albrecht Strasse in Berlin. Following the bombing of the prison during an air raid, he was sent to the concentration camp of Buchenwald, then to Schoenberg, and finally to Flossenburg. He was hanged early on the morning of 9th April, only a few days before the arrival of the Allies. His brother and his two brothers-in-law were executed around the same time.

To the last he exhibited a marvelous courage and compassion. At Schoenberg his final act was to conduct a service, preaching on the texts of the day, Isaiah 53:5 and I Peter 1:3. As he was led away to Flossenburg and execution, he left the words "This is the end -- for me the beginning of life."⁴⁷

46) D. Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 360.

47) E. Bethge: "Editor's Preface", Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 24.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are "two turning points along Bonhoeffer's way". "The first turning point may have occurred about 1931--1932 and might be formulated thus: Dietrich Bonhoeffer the theologian became a Christian. The second began in 1939: Dietrich Bonhoeffer the Christian became a contemporary, a man of his own particular time and place..."⁴⁸

Theologian-- Christian-- Contemporary-- in that order, and in a progression that did not exclude the prior phase in each stage, but rather transmuted it into a more profound, more drastic, more far-reaching import -- this is the structure of the development of Bonhoeffer's life.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about Dietrich Bonhoeffer is the way in which his own life provides the commentary on his theology. Bonhoeffer's theology, therefore, will always be of cardinal significance for those who must live through revolutionary times, not because he was a radical revolutionary, but because he could not stand aside while a world was facing crisis.

We must now turn to his Ethics itself and seek to discern the overall significance and the main themes in this work.

48) E. Bethge: "Turning Points in Bonhoeffer's Life and Thought" Union Seminary Quarterly Review, vol. 23 no. 1, p. 7.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND THE MAIN THEMES OF BONHOEFFER'S ETHICS

As I have already mentioned,¹ Bonhoeffer's Ethics appeared posthumously as a collection of articles, which were written in different times and different places, due mainly to Eberhard Bethge, the editor, in 1949. We can read the circumstances of its formation in the Editor's Preface.

Bethge explains as follows: "Already at the time of completing his Nachfolge (published in 1937) Bonhoeffer was planning a new approach to the problems of Christian ethics. He thought of this as the beginning of his actual life work."²

Starting his study from the field of systematic theology, Bonhoeffer gradually moves his concern towards the exegetical work of the Bible and to the ethical problems. For him the question of "what is the life of Christians who follow the commandments of God?" became the final one.

From 1937 it was Bonhoeffer's earnest desire to write his Ethics, but in fact he could not start it until 1940.

In June 1939 he was invited by Professor John Baillie, on behalf of Croall Lectureship Trust, to lecture at Edinburgh, and he hoped to make his lectures the basis for his book.

1) See Chapter One pp. 30ff.

2) D. Bonhoeffer: Ethics, p. ix. Hereafter referred to as Ethics, except where the context would demand clarification.

The war put an end to his preparations, and he did not take up this work again until 1940, when he was compelled to give up his clergy training duties and forbidden to speak in public anywhere in the Reich. (3)

These articles were written piece by piece in the midst of the Second World War while he was engaged in a resistance movement against Nazism. Therefore Bonhoeffer's Ethics consists of fragmentary and unfinished drafts, some of them complete and others not, and it is right to say that "this book is not the Ethics which Dietrich Bonhoeffer intended to have published."⁴

Nevertheless it is the Ethics that presents us with many significant and essential problems, and also illustrates Bonhoeffer's central and late theological thinking.⁵ The Ethics may be regarded as Bonhoeffer's most important work from the point of

3) Ethics, p. ix.

4) op. cit., p. ix.

5) According to Bethge, Bonhoeffer had been amassing many books on ethics since 1939. They are as follows: "the four volumes of the History of Ethics by O. Dittrich (1926), five volumes of the Theological Ethics by Richard Rothe (2nd ed., 1867), Hofmann's Ethics of 1872, the works of Oettingen, Harless, and Otto Piper, as well as Roman Catholic moral theologies and the Ethics of Scheler and Nikolai Hartmann. Other authors whom he consulted were Hermann Nohl with his Die sittlichen Grunderfahrungen (1939), Karl Jaspers with Die geistige Situation der Zeit and Nietzsche, Bauch, Wittmann, Noack, and Prell; in 1940 he read Kamlah's Christentum und Selbstbehauptung. He also went to the historians. He was stimulated by the idea of 'historical cicatrization' in Reinhold Schneider's books, and was impressed by F. W. von Oertzen's Die Junker (1939), Heuss's Friedrich Naumann,

view of its size and contents. And this is a challenging book not only to the Christians, but also to the modern world.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ETHICS IN BONHOEFFER'S THINKING

We shall begin our survey by making clear the place of Ethics in Bonhoeffer's thinking.

Attention must be paid to the fact that there has been a strong tradition of ethical dualism in Germany. It would seem to be a distorted interpretation of Luther, since it is said that this tendency originated in Luther's "two-kingdom" doctrine. It is common to think of church and state as being separate. The kingdom of God takes part in the sphere of the inner man; the kingdom of the state rules in the outer sphere. As the result, Gospel and law are considered as opposing each other.

The so-called German Christians justified themselves

Trevelyan's History of England, Alfred von Martin's Nietzsche und Burckhardt and Die Religion in Jakob Burckhardts Leben und Denken. He thought he learnt more from Don Quixote than from many books on ethics. He took up Balzac and Simplizissimus again, and began to read the German-speaking writers of the nineteenth century: Gottfried Keller, Stifter, Fontane, all of whom enriched him so much in prison. Whereas he had been taken by Montaigne's wisdom, Bernanos went somewhat into the background; to make up for that, Ernest Hello was his discovery of 1938-9." E. Bethge: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, pp. 619-620.

in obeying the trend of the times by abusing such dualistic ideas. They emphasized the importance of the orders of creation. But Bonhoeffer raised a question against such a thinking. In 1932 he read a paper entitled "Zur theologischen Begründung der Weltbundarbeit" (Concerning the Theological Foundation of the World Alliance), and criticized the German Christian's use of the orders of creation and developed his alternative of "orders of preservation." For Bonhoeffer, the world redeemed in Christ preserved by God in concrete ways until its end, and Christian ethics has its foundation on Christ.

In that paper he asks the question, "Whence does the Church know God's commandment for the moment?" He says "German Christians" will answer from the stand point of "orders of creation" as follows:

Because certain orders are evident in creation, one should not rebel against them, but simply accept them. One can then argue: Because the nations have been created different, each one is obliged to preserve and develop its characteristics. That is obedience towards the Creator. And if this obedience leads one to struggles and to war, these too must be regarded as belonging to the order of creation.
(6)

But he goes on to criticize it thus:

The danger of the argument lies in the fact that just about everything can be defended by it. One need only hold out something to be God-willed and God-created for it to be vindicated

6) No Rusty Swords, ed. by E. H. Robertson, p. 165.

for ever, the division of man into nations, national struggles, war, class struggle, the exploitation of the weak by the strong, the cut-throat competition of economics. (7)

Then he insists that our answer must come from Jesus Christ only:

The commandment cannot stem from anywhere but the origin of promise and fulfilment, from Christ. From Christ alone must we know what we should do. But not from him as the preaching prophet of the Sermon on the Mount, but from him as the one who gives us life and forgiveness, as the who has fulfilled the commandment of God in our place, as the one who brings and promises the new world. We can only perceive the commandment where the law is fulfilled, where the new world of the new order of God is established. Thus we are completely directed towards Christ. (8)

Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the orders of preservation became one of the fundamental stand points of the Confessing Church in resisting the Third Reich. His position appeared in Article Two of the Barmen Declaration of 1934. As I mentioned already he played a major role in the writing of it.⁹

Just as Jesus Christ is the pledge of the forgiveness of sins, just so--and with the same earnestness--is he also God's mighty claim on our whole life; in him we encounter a joyous liberation from the godless claims of this world to free and thankful service to his creatures.

We repudiate the false teaching that there are areas of our life in which we do not belong to Jesus Christ but to another lord, areas in which we do not need justification and sanctifi-

7) No Rusty Swords, p. 165.

8) op. cit., p. 166.

9) See Chapter One, p.24.

cation through him. (10)

It would seem then that in the midst of the time when the demonic character of the Nazi state became apparent, Bonhoeffer began to lay much emphasis on eschatological ethics or ultimate ethics rather than penultimate ethics.

The Cost of Discipleship, published in 1937, shows his concerns of that day. He insists that single-minded obedience is the only way to respond to Jesus' call. He treats the Sermon on the Mount as concrete demands of the crucified and risen Lord upon the disciple. And he recalls the church from cheap grace to costly grace. It is the ethics of the crisis and of the last days. His ethical thinking is moving to meet the difficult conditions of the late 1930's.

However, after Bonhoeffer took part in the German resistance movement, his mood began to drift away from the radically eschatological approach. Some Christians in Germany put a question mark to Bonhoeffer's action of his last years from this angle, but he did not hesitate to work with non-Christians in the political field, and through the close contacts with those who were willing to risk their lives simply

10) Printed in Robertson: Christians Against Hitler, p. 50.

for the freedom and dignity of man and love for the world, Bonhoeffer had to take up the penultimate problems of Christian ethics again.

It cannot be denied that there is a continuity between The Cost of Discipleship and Ethics, however we also find new ethical ideas at various stages in terms of Christology, anthropology, and concrete social and personal issues.¹¹ His point of view extends to the horizontal plane and he evaluates the secular positively. He does not see this world only as the wicked one. The essence of Bonhoeffer's ethics has been aptly phrased by N.H.G. Robinson as "ethics of a world already redeemed."¹² Bonhoeffer can say plainly "the reality of God discloses itself only by setting me entirely in the reality of the world, and when I encounter the reality of the world it is always already sustained, accepted and reconciled in the reality of God."¹³ He starts along the same lines as Barth, but carries this idea forwards to concrete fulfilment. The world or all creation has already been redeemed to God through Jesus Christ, so for him the world is not the profane but the one

11) cf. Woelfel: Bonhoeffer's Theology, p. 245.

12) N.H.G. Robinson: The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, p. 191.

13) Ethics, p. 167.

which is reconciled or redeemed to God in Christ.

The originality and peculiarity of his Ethics can be seen in his turning from a pure transcendental and eschatological ethics to an ethics of the ultimate and the penultimate. His thinking takes up the penultimate, the things before the last on the basis of the ultimate, the last thing. Men are living zwischen den Zeiten, namely between Christ's first and second comings. And this is Bonhoeffer's conviction that the penultimate ethics is Christian ethics for the concrete situations of here and now in a world which has been reconciled in Christ, but which must exist until the fulfilment of all things.¹⁴ Several phrases in the Ethics show his contention. For example;

It is quite certain that the preparation of the way is a matter of concrete interventions in the visible world, and it is certain that hunger and satisfaction of hunger are concrete and visible matters; yet everything depends on this activity being a spiritual reality, precisely because ultimately it is not indeed a question of the reform of earthly conditions, but it is a question of the coming of Christ. (15)

Needless to say, positive concerns with the penultimate and involvement in the political resistance

14) cf. Woelfel: Bonhoeffer's Theology, p. 245.

15) Ethics, p. 115. See also pp. 103ff, 110ff.

movement are correlative in him. For Bonhoeffer to live in faith as a Christian means to live as a secular man completely in this world. Therefore he can write frankly in his letter to Bethge of 21st July, 1944 as follows:

The Christian is not a 'homo religiosus', but simply a man, as Jesus was a man.

And he recognizes his turning plainly in the same letter. He mentioned a conversation with a young French pastor (Jean Lasserre), which had taken place thirteen years ago in America.

We are asking ourselves quite simply what we wanted to do with our lives. He said he would like to become a saint (and I think it's quite likely that he did become one).

His answer is however, different.

I disagreed with him, and said, in effect, that I should like to learn to have faith.

At this point Bonhoeffer makes a remarkable utterance.

For a long time I did not realize the depth of the contrast. I thought I could acquire faith by trying to live a holy life, or something like it. I suppose I wrote The Cost of Discipleship as the end of that path. Today I can see the dangers of that book, though I still stand by what I wrote. (16)

Jesus is the man for others, and the world is reconciled in Jesus Christ. Therefore the Christian

16) Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 369.

should live for others in this world, following the pattern of manhood of Jesus, chiefly his sufferings in and for the world. Bonhoeffer expresses this motif using his characteristic word "conformation", which will be discussed later. This ethical conviction supports the activities of his last years.

II. THE MAIN THEMES OF BONHOEFFER'S ETHICS

Before engaging on a survey of the Ethics, it is necessary to discuss the text itself. From the first edition of 1948 to the fifth edition Bethge arranged various materials thematically. As a result, the order of the contents was the following:

- I. Ethics as Formation
- II. Christ, Reality and Good (Christ, the Church and the World)
- III. The Last Things and The Things Before the Last
- IV. The Love of God and the Decay of the World
- V. The Church and the World
- VI. History and Good
- VII. The 'Ethical' and the 'Christian' as a Theme

In the sixth German edition published in 1962, however, Bethge tried a new arrangement and he organized the materials chronologically. As a result, the order was changed to the following:

- I. The Love of God and the Decay of the World (formerly Ch. IV)
- II. The Church and the World (formerly Ch. V)
- III. Ethics as Formation (formerly Ch. I)
- IV. The Last Things and The Things Before the Last (formerly Ch. III)
- V. Christ, Reality and Good (Christ, the Church and the World) (formerly Ch. II)
- VI. History and Good (formerly Ch. VI)
- VII. The 'Ethical' and the 'Christian' as a Theme (formerly Ch. VII)¹⁷

Bethge explains his intention in his important "Preface to the Rearranged Sixth German Edition".

17) Bonhoeffer's Ethics consists of two parts. The first part is the materials which are clearly to be incorporated in the framework of the book. The second part is a collection of unrelated essays dealing with various ethical themes, such as:

- I. The Doctrine of the Primus Usus Legis According to the Lutheran Symbolic Writings
- II. Personal and 'Real' Ethos
- III. State and Church
- IV. On the Possibility of the Word of the Church to the World
- V. What is Meant by 'Telling the Truth'?

It is clear these five essays in Part Two were not intended as an integral part of the Ethics. Needless to say, they are very important to understand Bonhoeffer's ethical thinking, but we can regard them as an expatiation of some specific problems which are involved in Part One. Therefore this present study will concentrate mainly on Part One.

He says:

Discussions about the development in Bonhoeffer's thought leading up to Letters and Papers from Prison made it seem desirable to re-examine the chronology of the composition of Ethics. The inclusion of this new edition in a uniform edition of Bonhoeffer's works has been the occasion for a version of Ethics which sets out to show Bonhoeffer's four fresh starts on the book in chronological sequence. (18)

He then tries to examine the four starting-points in his preface.¹⁹ Bethge presumes two sections, "The Love of God and the Decay of the World" and "The Church and the World", belong to the first starting-point. These two sections have close similarity to The Cost of Discipleship in thought and language. The sheets of paper which were used for these sections give us some evidence of date, because the same types of paper were used for letters in spring and summer of 1940 by Bonhoeffer. He also used leaves from a calendar for May 1939 to write the notes and headings of the latter chapter. Bethge concludes that these two chapters were written in 1939-1940 and "they were probably broken off before August, 1940."²⁰

The former chapter one: "Ethics as Formation", becomes the second starting-point. This was written

18) Ethics, p. xii.

19) op. cit., pp. xii-xiv.

20) op. cit., p. xii.

at Klein-Kroessin (Kieckow) in September 1940 at a time when Bonhoeffer was entering into contact with the German resistance through the meeting with Colonel Oster, and also when Hitler was scoring his most astounding successes.

The third starting-point involves "The Last Things and the Things Before the Last" and "Christ, Reality and Good". These date from the end of 1940 to the summer of 1941. It is clear that Bonhoeffer still had a hope of completing the whole work when he wrote these elaborated sections.

The political section "History and Good" and uncompleted fragments "The 'Ethical' and the 'Christian' as a Theme" form the last part. The former was written during the climax of his activity in the conspiracy in 1941-1942; the latter took shape in the winter of 1942-1943.

It is necessary to recognize that the Ethics is not only fragmentary, but also there is a development of thought. Working in the midst of secular, political and underground movements, his ethical thinking or his method of thinking might oscillate in various directions. He uses an ordered vertical structure of divine mandates on the one hand, and also an open horizontal approach based on the secularity of the world about him on the other. Naturally, there is some complexity in his Ethics. It is clear, however, that his main

motifs is to "search for the concrete character of the divine commandment, understood as the structure of this world rather than the ideal possibility of some other world."²¹ The vertical direction lays the foundation of the horizontal direction and where they cross is Jesus Christ.

When we take the above-mentioned matters into our consideration, the newly arranged sixth edition should be the text for our survey, because this edition of the Ethics will tell his original intention more clearly and will guide to more accurate understanding of his thinking. Consequently the text chosen for this study of the Ethics is the paperback edition published in 1978, as this third impression by SCM Press follows the order of the sixth German edition.

The task of illuminating the main themes of the Ethics must now be given some consideration. It has already been noted that in some sense the Ethics is a collection of Bonhoeffer's articles on ethical problems written on various occasions and at different times.²² There are both continuity and development in his thinking. It is appropriate, therefore, to make a survey of these themes by summarizing his Ethics in order to bring them out in bold relief.

21) A. Dumas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer; Theologian of Reality, p. 140.

22) See Chapter One, pp.30ff, and Chapter Two, pp.51ff.

A. First Part

"The Love of God and the Decay of the World" and "The Church and the World".

Bonhoeffer begins the first chapter of this section with a challenging sentence, namely:

The knowledge of good and evil seems to be the aim of all ethical reflections. The first task of Christian ethics is to invalidate this knowledge." (23)

The foundation of this conviction is that:

Christian ethics claims to discuss the origin of the whole problem of ethics, and thus professes to be a critique of all ethics simply as ethics. (24)

The distinctive difference between Christian ethics and all other ethics lies in the fact that the former deals with the life in the unity of the knowledge of God, while the latter is concerned with the life in the disunity of the knowledge of good and evil. He explains this connection by referring to the story of the Fall in Genesis:

Instead of knowing only the God who is good to him and instead of knowing all things in Him, he now knows himself as the origin of good and evil. Instead of accepting the choice and election of God, man himself desires to choose, to be the origin of the election. (25)

Thus man has become like God. However, he says:

23) Ethics, p. 3.

24) op. cit., p. 3.

In becoming like God man has become a god
against God. (26)

As a result of the Fall, man's eyes are opened to his nakedness, i.e. to his disunion with God and with men, and shame arises:

Shame is man's ineffaceable recollection of his estrangement from the origin; it is grief for this estrangement, and the powerless longing to return to unity with the origin. (27)

Then he discusses the relation of shame and conscience. He gives a definition:

In shame man is reminded of his disunion with God and with other men; conscience is the sign of man's disunion with himself. (28)

The call of conscience is always a prohibition, so that life falls into two parts: what is permitted (the good) and what is forbidden (the evil). Conscience does not embrace the whole of life, but reacts only to certain definite actions. It pretends to be the voice of God and thus the standard for the relation to other men, but it is actually man's judgement over God and other men and himself. "All knowledge is now based upon self-knowledge"²⁹ and thus all things are drawn into the process of disunion.

25) Ethics, p. 5

26) op. cit., p. 5

27) op. cit., p. 6

28) op. cit., p. 9

After giving a definition of this world as "The World of Conflicts", he moves to the thinking of the new world. He defines it as "The World of Recovered Unity". He declares:

Now anyone who reads the New Testament even superficially cannot but notice the complete absence of this world of disunion, conflict and ethical problems. Not man's falling apart from God, from men, from things and from himself, but rather the rediscovered unity, reconciliation, is now the basis of the discussion and the 'point of decision of the specifically ethical experience'. The life and activity of men is not at all problematic or tormented or dark: it is self-evident, joyful, sure and clear. (30)

He recognizes this difference of the old and the new in the encounter of Jesus with the Pharisee. He defines the Pharisee as follows:

The Pharisee is not an adventitious historical phenomenon of a particular time. He is the man to whom only the knowledge of good and evil has come to be of importance in his entire life; in other words, he is simply the man of disunion. (31)

For the Pharisee, therefore, the knowledge of good and evil is the most essential problem, and he is as severe a judge of himself as of his neighbour to the honour of God. Such a person cannot confront any man in any other way than by examining him with

29) Ethics, p. 11.

30) op. cit., p. 11.

31) op. cit., p. 12.

regard to his decisions in the conflicts of life. On the contrary, Jesus answers them from unity with God, not from the world of conflict. Therefore, Jesus never allows Himself to be drawn into one of their conflicts of decisions, but answers in such a way that he leaves the case of conflict beneath Him.

That is why their words so strikingly fail to make contact, and that is why Jesus's answers do not appear to be answers at all, but rather attacks of His own against the Pharisees, which is what they, in fact, are. (32)

Jesus speaks with a complete freedom which appears to the Pharisee as the negation of all order, all piety, and all belief:

The freedom of Jesus is not the arbitrary choice of one amongst innumerable possibilities; it consists on the contrary precisely in the complete simplicity of His action, which is never confronted by a plurality of possibilities, conflicts or alternatives, but always only by one thing. This one thing Jesus calls the will of God. He says that to do this will is His meat. This will of God is His life. He lives and acts not by the knowledge of good and evil but by the will of God. There is only one will of God. In it the origin is recovered; in it there is established the freedom and the simplicity of all action. (33)

Then Bonhoeffer tries to show what is new in that which He has brought with Him through interpreting Jesus's words such as; "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Mt. 7:1), "but when thou doest alms, let not thy left

32) Ethics, p. 13.

33) op. cit., P.15.

hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret" (Mt. 6:3ff) or the parable of the last judgement (Mt. 25:31ff). When the time of judgement will have come, the author stresses, we ourselves shall be filled with wonder at what we receive because all judging and all knowing will be on the part of God and of Jesus Christ.

It would also be entirely misunderstood if the new knowledge of reconciliation was regarded as psychologically observable data because the psychological view is itself always already subject to the law of disunion. But at the same time he pays attention to the necessity of proving the will of God:

The will of God may lie very deeply concealed beneath a great number of available possibilities. The will of God is not a system of rules which is established from the outset; it is something new and different in each different situation in life, and for this reason a man must ever anew examine what the will of God may be. (34)

This proving takes place solely on the basis of a metamorphosis, a complete inward transmutation of one's previous form, namely the overcoming of the form of the fallen man, Adam, and conformation with the form of the new man, Christ. It is based on the knowledge of God's will in Jesus Christ, which means that it implies living and increasing in love.³⁵

34) Ethics, p. 22

35) cf. Philippians: 1:9-10.

Only upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, only within the space which is defined by Jesus Christ, only 'in' Jesus Christ can man prove what is the will of God. (36)

The author then turns our attention to the fact that the knowledge of Jesus Christ, metamorphosis, renewal or love is something living. His proving presupposes one's unity with the origin which is re-gained in Christ, and yet one must seek to recover it anew in his actual concrete life. It is necessary to examine what is right in a given situation. And for this purpose, intelligence, discernment, attentive observation of the given facts, all these must be called into action and all embraced and pervaded by prayer.

There will be the belief that if a man asks God humbly God will give him certain knowledge of His will. (37)

He underlines that side by side with Jesus's saying about not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing, there is Paul's admonition to prove oneself with regard to One's faith and works. There is not only a proving of the will of God, but also a proving of one's self. This self-proving, however, is not directed towards one's own knowledge of good and evil and towards its realization in practical life, but which every day

36) Ethics, p. 24.

37) op. cit., p. 25.

afresh renews the knowledge that Jesus Christ is in us.

Bonhoeffer insists:

Since Jesus Christ is already present and active within us; since He belongs to us, the question can and must certainly now arise, whether and how in our daily lives we belong to Him, believe in Him and obey Him. (38)

But since we ourselves cannot answer this question, our self-examination will always consist precisely in our delivering ourselves up entirely to the judgement of Jesus Christ, and in so doing we will be doing the will of Jesus Christ in us.

The problem of doing is then discussed.

Only in doing can there be submission to the will of God. In doing God's will man renounces every right and every justification of his own; he delivers himself humbly into the hands of the merciful Judge. If the Holy Scripture insists with such great urgency on doing, that is because it wishes to take away from man every possibility of self-justification before God on the basis of his own knowledge of good and evil. The Bible does not wish man's own deed to be set side by side with the deed of God, even as a thank-offering or sacrifice, but it sets man entirely within the action of God and subordinates human action to God's action. The error of the Pharisees, therefore, did not lie in their extremely strict insistence on the necessity for action, but rather in their failure to act. 'They say, and do not do it.' (39)

He says the irreconcilable opposite of action is judgement. Judgement and action represent two possible and mutually exclusive attitudes towards the law. The

38) Ethics, p. 26.

39) op. cit., p. 27.

man who judges sets himself above the law and envisages the law as a criterion which he applies to others. But the doer of the law submits to the law and does not envisage the law as a criterion to his brother. He insists the doer of the law must be the hearer of the law:

Certainly the doer of the law must also be a hearer, but only in the sense that the hearer is always at the same time the doer (Jas. 1:22). A hearing which does not at the same instant become a doing becomes once again that 'knowing' which gives rise to judgement and so leads to the disruption of all action. (40)

The first chapter is concluded by an analysis of "love". The word of love marks the distinction between man in disunion and man in the origin. After he draws our attention to the point that there is a recognition of Christ, a powerful faith in Christ, and indeed a conviction and a devotion of love even unto death--all without love, he states clearly that according to the Bible "God is love" (I John 4:16). This sentence must be read with the emphasis on the word God not on the word love. "God is love" means not a human attitude, a conviction or a deed, but God Himself is love.

Love, therefore, is the name for what God does to man in overcoming the disunion in which man lives. This deed of God is Jesus Christ, is reconciliation. And so love is something which happens to man, something passive, something over which he does not himself dispose,

40) Ethics, p. 29.

simply because it lies beyond his existence in disunion. Love means the undergoing of the transformation of one's entire existence by God; it means being drawn in into the world as it lives and must live before God and in God. Love, therefore, is not man's choice, but it is the election of man by God. (41)

The structure of love consists in: "we love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). Therefore our love for God rests solely upon our being loved by God. In other words, our love is willing acceptance of the love of God in Jesus Christ. Love is passive not in a psychological but in a theological sense. But this passive character of love in the Bible does not exclude man's mighty thoughts and his spirited deeds. He concludes:

It is as whole men, as men who think and who act, that we are loved by God and reconciled with God in Christ. And it is as whole men, who think and who act, that we love God and our brothers. (42)

The second chapter is entitled "The Church and the World". Although this is a short and incomplete chapter, it must be noted that this was written under severe oppression by Nazism and we can recognize some reflection of his attitude towards the Third Reich.

Bonhoeffer pays attention to the fact that in confrontation with Nazi irrationalism and barbarism

41) Ethics, p. 36.

42) op. cit., p. 37.

the defenders of such human values as reason, culture, humanity, tolerance and self-determination, sought a refuge within the sphere of the Christian Church. All of such concepts, until very recently, had served as battle slogans against the church, Christianity, and Jesus Christ Himself. Then he insists that what is decisive is rather the fact that there took place a return to the origin. He explains that this is just like the children of the church returned to their mother in the hour of danger. The origin where they returned is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ alone has force and permanence against the antichrist.

He is the centre and the strength of the Bible, of the Church, and of theology, but also of humanity, of reason, of justice and of culture. (43)

In the section on "The Total and Exclusive Claim of Christ", he takes up two sayings of Jesus: "He that is not against us is for us" (Mk. 9:40) and "He that is not with me is against me" (Mt. 12:30). He insists that these two sayings appear to be in irreconcilable contradiction, but in reality they necessarily belong together. He says:

These two sayings necessarily belong together as the two claims of Jesus Christ, the claim to exclusiveness and the claim to totality. The greater the exclusiveness, the greater the freedom. But in isolation the claim to exclusiveness leads to fanaticism and to slavery; and in isolation the claim to totality leads to the secularization

43) Ethics, p.39.

and self-abandonment of the Church. The more exclusively we acknowledge and confess Christ as our Lord, the more fully the wide range of His dominion will be disclosed to us. (44)

The relationship of the Church with the world today is quite different from that of the Middle Ages. We solely know the deep interrelationship of the Church and the world in the recognition of the origin which has been awakened and vouchsafed to men in the suffering and in the seeking of refuge from persecution in Christ.

It is not that a 'Christian culture' must make the name of Jesus Christ acceptable to the world; but the crucified Christ has become the refuge and the justification, the protection and the claim for the higher values and their defenders that have fallen victim to suffering. (45)

At the next section of "Christ and Good People", the author makes clear that both the wicked and the good belong to Christ. Before Christ both the wicked and the good are only sinners, because they have fallen away from the origin. In her history the Church has concentrated almost exclusively on the relationship of Jesus Christ to the wicked and to wickedness. He, however, insists that the Church today must take with seriousness the question of the relation of the good man to Christ. For him, the Gospel should not lose

44) Ethics, p. 41.

45) op. cit., p. 42.

its power over good people. Through his keen and concrete analysis of the world, Bonhoeffer recognizes the dangerous tendencies of the justification of the good has been replaced by the justification of the wicked; the idealization of good citizenship has given way to the idealization of its opposite, of disorder, chaos, anarchy and catastrophe; and consequently the gospel of the sinners has become a commendation of sin. He could say plainly in times when lawlessness and wickedness triumph in complete unrestraint -- this was the situation of Nazi Germany -- Gospel will make itself known rather in relation to the few remaining just, truthful and human men.

B. Second Part

"Ethics as Formation"

The third chapter was written in this period. Bethge had put this third chapter to the beginning of the former edition, for it introduces the basic theme of the whole. He begins with these sentences:

Rarely perhaps has any generation shown so little interest as ours does in any kind of theoretical or systematic ethics. ... The reason for this is not to be sought in any supposed ethical indifference on the part of our period. On the contrary it arises from the fact that our period, more than any earlier period in the history of the west, is oppressed by a superabounding reality of concrete ethical problems.
(46)

46) Ethics, p. 46.

He insists the theoretical or systematic ethics cannot grasp what is real. According to his insight the man who is able to deal effectively with evil today is not the man of reason or moral fanaticism or conscience or duty or free responsibility or private virtue, but alone the man who can combine simplicity with wisdom.⁴⁷ Bonhoeffer expresses this matter by a characteristic phrase, "our business now is to replace our rusty swords with sharp ones."⁴⁸

To be simple is to fix one's eyes solely on the simple truth of God, and to be wise is to see reality as it is and to see into the depths of things. And simplicity and wisdom are combined by looking in freedom at God and at reality, which rests solely upon him. But how can man keep his eyes on both at the same time? As long as the world and God are torn asunder, it is impossible for anyone. There is, however, one place where God and the cosmic reality are reconciled, where God and man have become one, and this place does not lie beyond reality in the realm of ideas, but in the midst of history as a divine miracle. "It lies in

47) See Godsey: The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 204.

48) Ethics, p. 50.

Jesus Christ, the Reconciler of the world."⁴⁹

It is his conviction that those who gaze at Jesus Christ will not watch God without the world or the world without God.

Ecce homo!--Behold the man! In Him the world was reconciled with God. It is not by its overthrowing but by its reconciliation that the world is subdued. It is not by ideals and programmes or by conscience, duty, responsibility and virtue that reality can be confronted and overcome, but simply and solely by the perfect love of God. Here again it is not by a general idea of love that this is achieved, but by the really lived love of God in Jesus Christ. (50)

Ecce homo whom God has taken to himself, has sentenced and crucified and awakened to a new life. Jesus is not a man (ein Mensch), but he is man (der Mensch). Through Him, God loves man, not an ideal man but man as he is. God loves the world, not an ideal world but the real world. The miracle of Christ's resurrection means God's "yes" to man. This "yes" is stronger than judgement and death. It is God's will to create a new man, a new life, a new creature. Even while mankind is still living the old life in the world of death and sin, he is already beyond them.

Then Bonhoeffer discusses his characteristic theme "conformation". For him Christian ethics is

49) Ethics, p. 51.

50) op. cit., pp. 51-52.

the ethics of conformation, because only the form of Jesus Christ confronts the world and defeats it.

When he emphasizes formation, he does not mean to form the world by means of Christian plans and programmes.

On the contrary, he says:

Formation comes only by being drawn in into the form of Jesus Christ. It comes only as formation (Gestaltung) in His likeness, as conformation (Gleichgestaltung) with the unique form of Him who was made man, was crucified, and rose again. (51)

This formation, of course, is not achieved by man's efforts, but rather it is achieved only when the form of Jesus Christ itself works upon us in such a manner that it moulds our form in its own likeness (Gal. 4:19). Christ remains the only giver of forms.

In other words:

Christ is the Incarnate, Crucified and Risen One whom the Christian faith confesses. To be transformed in His image (II Cor. 3:18, Phil. 3:10, Rom. 8:29 and 12:2)-- this is what is meant by the formation of which the Bible speaks. (52)

To be conformed with the Incarnate is to be the man or to be a real man who is an object of the love of God. To be formed in the likeness of the Crucified means to die daily before God for the sake of sin. He dies the death of a sinner and bears all sufferings to accept God's judgement upon him. To be conformed

51) Ethics, p. 61.

52) op. cit., p. 61.

with the Risen One means to be a new man before God, even though the glory of his new life remains "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3)

He insists that the form which takes shape in man is solely Christ's form itself. It is neither the form of God nor merely an imitation or repetition of Christ's form. God became man, so man becomes man. Man, however, cannot and does not become God. He points out there is a mystery that only a small number of men recognize the form of their Redeemer. They are His Church.

Formation consequently means Jesus's taking form in His Church. In the New Testament the Church is called the Body of Christ. The body is the form. So the church is Christ himself who has taken form among men. The Church can be called the Body of Christ because in the Body of Jesus Christ man (der Mensch), and also all mankind are really taken up by Him. The Church is nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has really taken form. What matters in the Church is the form of Christ, and its taking form amidst a small band of men. Therefore he declares:

The point of departure for Christian ethics is the body of Christ, the form of Christ in the form of the Church, and formation of the Church in conformity with the form of Christ. (53)

Since Christ is not a principle, the proclaimer of a system, a teacher and legislator, but a man, a real man (wirklicher Mensch) like ourselves, the form of Christ is one and the same at all times and in all places. He insists that Christ is concerned with helping his neighbour to become a man before God. Christ gives effect to reality, affirms reality and he himself is the foundation of all human reality.

And so formation in conformity with Christ has this double implication. The form of Christ remains one and the same, not as a general idea but in its own unique character as the incarnate, crucified and risen God. And precisely for the sake of Christ's form the form of the real man is preserved, and in this way the real man receives the form of Christ. (54)

For this reason the Christian ethics is apart from any kind of abstract ethics, and is always entirely concrete. The point is not what is good once and for all, but the way in which Christ takes form among us here and now. It means that our concerns are the times and places which confront us with concrete problems, set us tasks, and charge us with responsibility. However it does not mean to admit a room for unrestrained individualism. He adds carefully that:

What prevents this is the fact that by our history we are set objectively in a definite

54) Ethics, p. 66.

nexus of experiences, responsibilities and decisions from which we cannot free ourselves again except by an abstraction. (55)

This nexus is characterized in a peculiar manner by the fact that the form of Christ has been consciously affirmed and recognized as the underlying basis of it. On this conviction, he intends to pick up the West as the region for which we must speak and to discuss the way in which in this western world the form of Christ takes form.

He concludes this section by emphasizing the concrete character of ethics as formation and says:

Ethics as formation is possible only upon the foundation of the form of Jesus Christ which is present in His Church. The Church is the place where Jesus Christ's taking form is proclaimed and accomplished. It is this proclamation and this event that Christian ethics is designed to serve. (56)

"Inheritance and Decay". In this section he tries his bold endeavour to speak about the way in which the form of Jesus Christ takes form in our world, that is in the western world.

In the East, existence is timeless and history assumes the character of mythology. He refers to Japan saying even "where the western way of existence has been most fully accepted, history still retains a

55) Ethics, p. 67.

56) op. cit., p. 68.

mythological character."⁵⁷ The Christian West, on the contrary, is impressed with an awareness of temporality and a historical heritage which is consciously or unconsciously effected by the entry of God into our history "here" and "now", that is at a definitive place and a definite point of time. God's "yes" to history in his incarnation in Jesus Christ and his "no" in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ gives to each moment of history an infinite and unresolvable tension. Through the life and death of Jesus Christ history becomes for the first time truly temporal and in its temporality it becomes the history of God's consent.

He insists that the historical Jesus Christ is the continuity of Western history. Therefore Western history is indissolubly linked with the entire history of Israel in that Jesus was the promised Messiah of the Israelite-Jewish people, and indirectly related to Greco-Roman antiquity in that it was the time and world chosen for the incarnation (its nearness to Christ), but also the time of the crucifixion (its opposition to Him).

It is the Roman heritage which comes to represent the combination and assimilation of antiquity with the Christian element, and it is the Greek heritage which comes to represent opposition and hostility to Christ. (58)

57) Ethics, p. 69.

58) op. cit., p. 70.

The former is more characteristic of Roman Catholicism and the Western European countries such as France, Holland, England and Italy, the latter of the Reformation and Germany. He analyzes as follows: Wherever the incarnation of Christ is more intensely in the foreground of Christian consciousness, the reconciliation of antiquity with Christianity is sought for and wherever the cross of Christ dominates the Christian message, the breach between Christ and antiquity is emphasized. But since Christ is both the Incarnate and the Crucified, the due acceptance of the historical heritage of antiquity is a task which the Christian West has yet to complete, and with the completion of this task as their common purpose the Western European peoples and the Germans will draw more closely together. He thinks that the unity of the West through the form of Christ is the heritage from the early periods of the Western history. Pope and Emperor alike strove for the formation of this unity. And this heritage still remains today in the form of the Roman Church, i.e.: the Papacy.

The corpus christianum, however, was broken by the Reformation into its two constituent parts, the corpus christi and the world, and this because Luther was compelled by the word of the Bible to conclude that;

The unity of the Church can lie only in Jesus Christ as He lives in His word and sacra-

ment, and not in any political power. (59)

Luther recognizes two kingdoms which must neither be fixed together nor yet be torn asunder. They are the kingdom of the preached word of God and the kingdom of the sword, the kingdom of the Church and the kingdom of the world. Yet the Lord of both kingdoms is the God who is made manifest in Jesus Christ.

The Thirty Years' War finally laid bare the political disunity of the west which had resulted from the schism of faith. The Peace of Westphalia confirmed and ratified the confessional schism as the fate and inheritance of the western world. (60)

However, the fact that both sides called upon the name of Jesus Christ means that the common guilt was not destined to destroy the unity of the West. Then he points out the process of secularization quickly set in and continues until today. Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms was misinterpreted to imply:

The emancipation of man in his conscience, his reason and his culture and as the justification of the secular as such. (61)

On the Catholic side the process of secularization rapidly became anti-clerical and even anti-Christian, and the result was the outbreak of the French Revolution, with its emphasis on the emancipated man -- emancipated

59) Ethics, p. 74.

60) op. cit., p. 75.

61) op. cit., p. 76.

reason, class and people.

The emancipated reason, which brought about the fresh wind of intellectual clarity and honesty, led to the discovery of "that mysterious correspondence between the laws of thought and the laws of nature," and so fostered "the unparalleled rise of technology."⁶² Besides technology the Revolution also produces in the western world the stirring of the mass movement and modern nationalism, so that the total result was the creation of a new unity of mind in the West which was rooted in the emancipation of man as reason, mass and nation.

The new unity, however, already carried within itself the seeds of decay. The author asserts sharply, in the struggle for freedom these three work together in agreement, but once their freedom was achieved they became deadly enemies. Because:

The masses and nationalism are hostile to reason. Technology and the masses are hostile to nationalism. Nationalism and technology are hostile to the masses. (63)

Revolution results in nihilism. For Bonhoeffer nihilism closely combines with the deification of man.

The new unity which the French Revolution brought

62) Ethics, p. 78.

63) op. cit., p. 81.

to Europe, the crisis of which we are experiencing today, is western godlessness. He clarifies this western godlessness as totally different from the atheism of certain individual Greek, Indian, Chinese and western thinkers, because it is not the theoretical denial of the existence of a God.

It is itself a religion, a religion of hostility to God. (64)

For them God is not the living God of the Bible but the New Man. In paganism, gods are adored in the form of men, but in the western godlessness "it is man who is adored in the form of God, indeed in the form of Jesus Christ."⁶⁵ This godlessness is essentially hostile to the Church. But he also remarks upon the fact that this western godlessness should not simply identify with enmity towards the Church. There are two kinds of godlessness: one is the godlessness in religious and Christian clothing, which he calls a hopeless godlessness and the other is the godlessness against religion and against the Church, which he calls a godlessness full of promise.

It is the protest against pious godlessness in so far as this has corrupted the Churches, and thus in a certain sense, if only negatively, it

64) Ethics, p. 82.

65) op. cit., p. 82.

defends the heritage of a genuine faith in God and of a genuine Church. There is relevance here in Luther's saying that perhaps God would rather the curses of the ungodly than the alleluia of pious. (66)

Bonhoeffer then turns his attention to the composite problem which he feels within the American way of life. He recognizes the difference in character between the American Revolution and the French Revolution, because the fundamental stream of the American democracy is itself founded upon the kingdom of God and the limitation of all earthly powers by the sovereignty of God and not upon the emancipated man. He notices the fact that in Anglo-Saxon countries democracy is regarded as the Christian form of the state. In spite of this the Anglo-Saxon countries have not escaped the process of secularization. He explains the reason as follows:

The cause does not lie in the misinterpretation of the distinction between the two offices of kingdoms, but rather in the reverse of this, in the failure of the enthusiasts to distinguish at all between the office or kingdom of the state and the office or kingdom of the Church. (67)

In consequence, the Church totally capitulates to the world and the godlessness remains more covert.

By the loss of the unity which is possessed

66) Ethics, p. 83. Bonhoeffer developed this thinking in his Letters and Papers from Prison. The phrases such as "to live without God before God", "non-religious interpretation of the Bible" or his positive attitude towards the modern secular world should be understood in this context. See also p. 44ff.

67) op. cit., p. 84.

through the form of Jesus Christ, the western world is brought to the brink of the void. (68)

He thinks that the western world is now facing a decisive struggle of the last days. The void towards which the west is drifting is a rebellious and outrageous void, and one which is the enemy of both God and man. In the face of the peril of the void the question of the historical inheritance loses its meaning. There is no future nor past. People fluctuate between the most bestial enjoyment of the moment, and an adventurous game of chance. Bonhoeffer says:

If we ask what remains, there can be only one answer: fear of the void. (69)

Then he asserts:

Two things alone have still the power to avert the final plunge into the void. (70)

First is the miracle of a new awakening of faith, which is proclaimed by the Church. Second is the force which the Bible calls the "restrainer" κατέχων (II Thess. 2:7), that is the power of the state to establish and maintain order. These two, church and state, are different in nature, but in the face of imminent chaos they are in close alliance.

68) Ethics, p. 85.

69) op. cit., p. 87.

70) op. cit., p. 88.

The Church now stands in a peculiar situation and she is called to an unprecedented task. The western world has refused to accept its historical inheritance by turning its back on Christ. "The corpus christianum is broken asunder."⁷¹ In this situation the Church, corpus christi, must prove that Christ is the living Lord of this hostile world. In other words, as the bearer of a historical inheritance the Church has an obligation to the historical future. The Church must leave not only the last day to God's decision, but also the possibility of the continuance of history.

"Guilt, Justification and Renewal". In this section he reiterates his assertion that only the man who is taken up in Christ is the real man. Therefore the man who is apostate from Christ is at the same time apostate from his own essential nature. The only way for man to turn back is through recognition of guilt of his defection from Christ and this marks the beginning of his conformation with Christ. It is the Church that the place where this recognition of guilt becomes real. The Church is the community of human beings which recognize their guilt towards Christ by the grace of Christ. The recognition of guilt must be confessed in the sense that they themselves are guilty of it.

71) Ethics, p. 88.

And it is a sign of the living presence of Christ.

With this confession the entire guilt of the world falls upon the Church, upon the Christians, and since this guilt is not denied here, but is confessed, there arises the possibility of forgiveness. (72)

He enumerates eight guilts which the Church should confess. Through the confession alone the Church can become partaker of the form of Christ, sharing in his cross and in the glory of his new righteousness and new life.

Bonhoeffer insists plainly that the justification and renewal of the Western world lie solely in the divine justification and renewal of the Church. Of course the justification and renewal of the Church and the western world must be spoken in a different sense.

For the Church and for the individual believer there can be only a complete breach with guilt and a new beginning which is granted through the forgiveness of sin, but in the historical life of the nations there can always be only the gradual process of healing. (73)

The justification and renewal of the west will come only when justice, order and peace are restored, when past guilt is forgiven, when it is no longer imagined that what has been done can be undone by means of punitive measures and reprisals, and when the Church is given room to carry her work among the nations.

72) Ethics, p. 91.

73) op. cit., p. 96.

C. Third Part

"The Last Things and the Things Before the Last".

Chapter Four, the discussion of the ultimate and the penultimate, is a new motif for him which becomes a reality derived from his experience in the resistance movement. Catholic theology usually deals with the penultimate in the light of the ultimate which perfects it. However Protestant theology does not pay much attention to the penultimate. Bonhoeffer now tries to re-evaluate the meaning of the penultimate.

He begins this section as follows:

The origin and the essence of all Christian life are comprised in the one process or event which the Reformation called justification of the sinner by grace alone. (74)

It is his presupposition that the last word is justification. He insists that the whole life of man -- his past and future -- is merged in one in the presence of God. His past is forgiven, his future is secure, and his life is justified in Christ and new in the Church.

Then he points out justification is not just by grace alone, but also by faith alone. Faith alone sets life on the new foundation which alone can justify life before God and this foundation is the life, death, and

74) Ethics, p. 98.

resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith means the finding and holding of this foundation. And faith is a passive submission to an action and in this submission alone it is itself an action. He insists:

My faith that my life is justified is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is, therefore, no other means of access to the justification of my life than through faith alone. (75)

God's justifying word is final in two aspects: first, it is final in a qualitative sense because it is completely free and consequently excludes man's every effect and method of achieving it on his own; second, it is final in a temporal sense because it is always preceded by something penultimate which remains, even though the ultimate entirely annuls and invalidates it. In other words, for the sake of the ultimate we can travel the whole length of the way of the things before the last.

In the section of "The Penultimate", he raises a question whether to take the penultimate seriously in its own way is to incur guilt? Or:

Does not this mean that, over and over again, the penultimate will be what commends itself precisely for the sake of the ultimate, and that it will have to be done not with a heavy conscience but with a clear one? (76)

75) Ethics, p. 99.

76) op. cit., p. 104.

The author now points out the fact that to solve the problem of the relation between the ultimate and the penultimate in Christian life, two extreme solutions were given. They are to be radical or to compromise and he denies both of these approaches, because the radical solution can see only the ultimate and considers everything penultimate as enmity towards Christ on the one hand, and the compromise solution can on principle set apart the ultimate from the penultimate, in which case the penultimate retains its right on its own account and is not threatened or imperilled by the ultimate on the other. He explains both solutions are equally extreme and both alike contain truth and untruth.

In both cases thoughts which are in themselves equally right and necessary are in an inadmissible manner made absolute. The radical solution has as its point of departure the end of all things, God the Judge and Redeemer; the compromise solution bases itself upon the Creator and Preserver. On the one side it is the end that is regarded as absolute, and on the other side it is things as they are. Thus creation and redemption, time and eternity confront one another in a conflict which cannot be resolved; the unity of God Himself is sundered, and faith in God is broken apart. (77)

Further he insists:

In Jesus Christ there is neither radicalism nor compromise, but there is the reality of God and men. (78)

77) Ethics, pp. 105-106.

78) op. cit., p. 106.

For him only the God-man Jesus Christ is real, and only through Him the world will be preserved. The true relationship between the ultimate and the penultimate can be found solely in Jesus Christ, the incarnate, crucified, and risen God-man.

The incarnation means that God enters into created reality and thereby reveals his love for his creation. The manhood of Jesus implies both the absolute condemnation of sin and the relative condemnation of the established human orders. But even in this condemnation Jesus allows human reality to remain a penultimate which must be taken seriously in its own way.

The crucifixion means that God pronounces the final condemnation on the fallen creation and thereby reveals his judgement upon all flesh. The cross of Jesus discloses the judgement of the ultimate upon all that is penultimate. But at the same time the cross reveals mercy towards that penultimate which bows before the judgement of the ultimate.

The resurrection means that God sets an end to death and calls a new creation into life, thereby manifesting his will for a new world. Man has already risen again with Christ to newness of life. However he still remains in the world of the penultimate until he passes the boundary of death.

The life of the Christian with the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ means being a man through

the efficacy of the incarnation, being sentenced and pardoned through the efficacy of the cross, and living a new life through the efficacy of the resurrection. There cannot be one of these without the rest.

He concludes:

As for the question of the things before the last, it follows from what has been said so far that the Christian life means neither a destruction nor a sanctioning of the penultimate. In Christ the reality of God meets the reality of the world and allows us to share in this real encounter. It is an encounter beyond all radicalism and beyond all compromise. Christian life is participation in the encounter of Christ with the world. (79)

Then he considers the penultimate more closely in the section "The Preparing of the Way". He says that the penultimate, which is everything that precedes the justification of the sinner by grace alone, must be taken seriously simply on account of its relation to the ultimate. He specifies concretely two things as the penultimate: they are being man (Menschsein) and being good (Gutsein).

He emphasizes that Christ makes His own way when he comes, regardless of man's preparation or readiness. His coming belongs to the matter of the ultimate. Nevertheless, this does not give us any excuse for neglecting to prepare for his coming by removing every possible obstacle in his way.

79) Ethics, p. 110.

Hunger, injustice, loneliness, disorder -- these are penultimate conditions which the Christian must continually seek to lessen for the sake of the ultimate. But the preparation of the way for Christ cannot be simply a matter of the establishment of certain desirable conditions. He insists that:

It is quite certain that the preparation of the way is a matter of concrete interventions in the visible world, ... yet everything depends on this activity being a spiritual reality, precisely because ultimately it is not indeed a question of the reform of earthly conditions, but it is a question of the coming of Christ. (80)

It implies that they must be acts of humiliation before the coming of the Lord, that is to say, they must be acts of repentance. But repentance means a concrete action and this action should be directed towards the twin goals: to be man and to be good. He sees what 'to be man' and 'to be good' means, in the coming Lord himself. It is because Christ is coming that we must be man and we must be good. He explains:

It is in relation to Christ that the fallen world becomes intelligible as the world which is preserved and sustained by God for the coming of Christ, the world in which we can and should live good lives as men in orders which are established. (81)

80) Ethics, p. 115.

81) op. cit., p. 116.

The matter of the penultimate and the preparation of the way must be taken seriously. However there is no method, no way to attain to the ultimate from the penultimate. Preparation of the way is always His way to us, that is, a way from the ultimate to the penultimate.

Then he analyzes the spiritual situation of western Christendom as follows:

The calling in question of the last things, of the ultimate, which has been taking place to an ever increasing extent during the past two hundred years, has at the same time imperilled the stability of the penultimate, which was closely linked here with the ultimate, and has brought it near to disruption. And in its turn the breaking up of the penultimate has as its consequence an intensified neglect and depreciation of the ultimate. (82)

He urges the need to protect the ultimate by taking due care for the penultimate. It is his conviction that the more Christian attitude nowadays is:

To claim precisely that man as a Christian who would himself no longer dare to call himself a Christian, and then with much patience to help him to the profession of faith in Christ. (83)

From this point of view Bonhoeffer now attempts to recover the meaning of "The Natural" for Protestant ethics. Protestant tradition has tended to exalt grace to such an extent that everything human and

82) Ethics, pp. 118-119.

83) op. cit., p. 119.

natural sank into the abyss of sin, so that no one dared to consider the relative distinctions within the fallen creation. As the result, the concept of the natural lost a place in Protestant thought. He recognizes this is a serious and substantial loss for the Protestants and insists on the necessity to recover its real meaning on the basis of the gospel.

What is, then, the natural according to Bonhoeffer? It is neither the creaturely nor the sinful, but it is "that which, after the Fall, is directed towards the coming of Christ."⁸⁴ On the contrary, the unnatural closes its doors against the coming of Christ. Through the Fall the 'creature' becomes 'nature', and this means that the direct dependence of the creature on God is replaced by the relative freedom of natural life. This relative freedom, which can be used in either a true (natural) or false (unnatural) way, should not be confused with an absolute freedom for God and for the neighbour which is imparted by the word of God alone.

The natural, which is the form of life preserved by God for the fallen world and directed towards justification, redemption and renewal through Christ, is determined according to its form through God's will to preserve it and through its being directed towards

84) Ethics, p. 121.

Christ. According to its contents, the natural is the form of the preserved life itself, the form which embraces the whole human race. Formally the natural can be discerned only in its relation to Jesus Christ, but in regard to its contents it can be perceived by man's reason. Reason is not a divine principle of knowledge but it is wholly embedded in the natural.

Therefore he states:

Reason understands the natural as something that is universally established and independent of the possibility of empirical verification.

From this there follows as conclusion that is of crucial importance, namely, that the natural can never be something that is determined by any single part or any single authority within the fallen world. (85)

The natural simply exists, and its innate power of existence serves to protect life against the unnatural and therefore provides "a solid basis for that optimistic view of human history which confines itself within the limits of the fallen world."⁸⁶

Then he moves to the section of "Natural Life". Natural life is formed life. It is neither vitalism, which is an absolutization of life as an end in itself, nor mechanization, which is an absolutization of life as means to an end. He insists that natural life stands

85) Ethics, p. 123.

86) op. cit., p. 125.

between them and explains as follows:

In relation to Jesus Christ the status of life as an end in itself is understood as creaturehood, and its status as a means to an end is understood as participation in the kingdom of God; while, within the framework of the natural life, the fact that life is an end itself finds expression in the rights with which life is endowed, and the fact that life is a means to an end finds expression in the duties which are imposed on it. Thus, for the sake of Christ and His coming, natural life must be lived within the framework of certain definite rights and certain definite duties. (87)

Christian ethics speaks of rights firstly and of duties later. It is the same within the framework of the natural life, and by following this precept we are allowing the Gospel to have its way.

He believes that Roman law dictum suum cuique (to each his own) expresses the most general formulation of the rights which are given with its natural, but it is misapplied either if 'his own' is taken to mean 'the same', so that the manifoldness of the natural is destroyed in favour of an abstract law, or if 'his own' is defined arbitrarily and subjectively, so that the unity of rights is nullified in the interests of free self-will. Any 'innate right' must be predicated on the recognition of the natural rights of others, which implies that the conflict of rights is inherent in the natural itself. This points to a limitation of the

87) Ethics, p. 126.

principle of suum cuique, since it does not take into account the fact of sin operating in the natural and therefore the unavoidable rise of conflicts that can be settled only through the application of a positive right introduced from without. Yet this fact does not deprive the principle of its relative correctness of its status as penultimate.⁸⁸

A presupposition of suum cuique, that is each man comes into the world with a natural right of his own, is contradicted by social eudaemonism (Sozialeudaemonismus). However he insists that the right of individual must not be subordinated to the right of the community. It is his conviction that the existence of a natural right of the individual follows from the fact that it is God's will to create the individual and to endow him with eternal life. Social eudaemonism, which allies itself with a sort of blind voluntarism, can be checked only by the reason which perceives and introduces into consciousness the reality of the fallen world. He concludes this section as follows:

The principle of suum cuique is the highest possible attainment of a reason which is in accord with reality and which, within the natural life, discerns the right which is given to the individual by God (of whom reason knows nothing). (89)

88) See Godsey. The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 224.

89) Ethics, p. 130.

Then he continues his discussion of the rights of natural life from the point of view of their contents. He points out the question of the guarantor of these rights as an essential one. His answer is God. But at the same time he emphasizes that God continually makes use of life itself to overcome every violation of the natural. So he says in any case the individual will always have to bear in mind that his most powerful ally is life itself. He answers clearly 'yes' to the question whether the individual is entitled to defend his natural rights. From this perspective he discusses several important problems concretely such as: "The right to Bodily Life", "Suicide", "Reproduction and nascent Life", "The Freedom of Bodily Life" and "The Natural Rights of the Life of the Mind".⁹⁰

The fifth chapter of the Ethics is entitled "Christ, Reality and Good (Christ, the Church and the World)." Bonhoeffer begins this chapter with the definition, that the task of Christian ethics is not to ask "How can I be good?" or "How can I do good?" but "What is the will of God?" The starting-point of Christian ethics is faith in God as the ultimate reality who reveals himself in Jesus Christ, and so the problem

90) Ethics, pp. 131-160.

of Christian ethics is how the revelational reality of God in Christ becomes real among men:

The problem of Christian ethics is the realization among God's creatures of the revelational reality of God in Christ, just as the problem of dogmatics is the truth of the revelational reality of God in Christ. The place which in all other ethics is occupied by the antithesis of 'should be' and 'is', idea and accomplishment, motive and performance, is occupied in Christian ethics by the relation of reality and realization, past and present, history and event (faith), or, to replace the equivocal concept with the unambiguous name, the relation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The question of good becomes the question of participation in the divine reality which is revealed in Christ. (91)

The good is the real, and the real is not abstract but possesses reality only in the reality of God. Therefore, only when we share in this reality do we share in the good. He states:

Man is an indivisible whole, not only as an individual in his person and work but also as a member of the community of men and creatures in which he stands. (92)

The question of good deals with this reality.

Participation in the indivisible whole of the divine reality--this is the sense and the purpose of the Christian enquiry concerning good. (93)

Then what is meant by reality? The positivist believes that reality itself teaches what is good. But

91) Ethics, p. 163.

92) op. cit., p. 165.

93) op. cit., p. 166.

the Christian sees both the reality of the world and the reality of God in Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer explains:

The reality of God discloses itself only by setting me entirely in the reality of the world, and when I encounter the reality of the world it is always already sustained, accepted and reconciled in the reality of God. This is the inner meaning of the revelation of God in the man Jesus Christ. (94)

Christian ethics inquires about the way this reality is being realized in the present, the way in which life may be conducted in this reality, and therefore, the way one participates in the reality of God and of the world in Jesus Christ today.

The discussion of what he calls "Thinking in Terms of Two Spheres" is notable one. Since the beginnings of Christian ethics the main underlying conception in ethical thought has been the conception of a juxtaposition and conflict of two spheres, the one divine, holy, supernatural and Christian, and the other worldly, profane, natural and un-Christian. As the result reality is divided into two parts and ethical task is thought to find the proper relation between the two. In medieval scholasticism the realm of the natural is made subordinate to the realm of grace; in pseudo-Lutheranism the autonomy of the orders of this world is proclaimed in opposition to the law of Christ; and in the Enthusiasts the congregation of the Elect takes up the struggle with a hostile

94) Ethics, p. 167.

world for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

It is Bonhoeffer's conviction that all these schemes are contradictory to the thought of the Bible and the Reformation. He insists there is only one reality and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world. In other words, there is "only the one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united."⁹⁵

He criticizes those who see the world in terms of such pairs of concepts as secular and Christian, natural and supernatural, profane and sacred, rational and revelational. He asserts the natural, profane and rational world is taken up into the divine and cosmic reality in Christ and must always be seen in the movement of being accepted and becoming accepted by God in Christ. Of course what is Christian is not identical with what is of the world, but there is a unity which derives solely from the reality of Christ or from faith in this ultimate reality. He interprets Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms as originally intended to be understood in the sense of polemical unity. Therefore he insists that there is no real possibility of being a Christian outside the reality of the world and also there is no real worldly existence outside the reality

95) Ethics, p. 170.

of Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless he also recognizes that we are still confronted with other important questions.

Are there really no ultimate static contraries, no spaces which are separated from one another once and for all? Is not the Church of Jesus Christ such a space, a space which is cut off from the space of the world? And, finally, is not the kingdom of the devil a space of this kind, and one which will never enter into the kingdom of Christ? (96)

He recognizes that the Church occupies a definite space in the world -- a space which is delimited by her public worship, her organizations and her parish life. But he insists that this space is not interpreted in a purely empirical sense. The Church is the space in the world where Christ's reign over the whole world is evidenced and proclaimed, and it is not something which exists on its own account. It is continually reaching out beyond itself and extending its boundaries. The Church needs the space in order to serve the world by proclaiming the world is loved by God and reconciled with Him. He explains that:

The only way in which the Church can defend her own territory is by fighting not for it but for the salvation of the world. Otherwise the Church becomes a 'religious society' which fights in its own interest and thereby ceases at once to be the Church of God and of the world. (97)

96) Ethics, p. 173.

97) op. cit., pp. 174-175.

Then he moves to the third question. At first sight the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the devil would justify thinking in terms of two spheres. He says, however, yet the devil must serve Christ even against his will and so the realm of devil is not contrary to but beneath the feet of Jesus Christ. Even the disordered world possesses its final and true reality not in the devil but in Christ, because it is reconciled with God in Christ.

In the New Testament it is presupposed that the world needs reconciliation with God but that it is not capable of achieving it by itself. Therefore, even as the world opposes and rejects the reality of the love of God, the Church must open the eyes of precisely this rebellious world to this reality and to its reconciliation with God. In this way the lost and sentenced world is incessantly drawn into the event of Christ.

He tries to replace the picture of the two spheres by the picture of the body of Christ. He explains:

We shall need above all to direct our gaze to the picture of the body of Christ Himself, who became man, was crucified and rose again. In the body of Jesus Christ God is united with humanity, the whole of humanity is accepted by God, and the world is reconciled with God. ... Whoever sets eyes on the body of Jesus Christ in faith can never again speak of the world as though it were lost, as though it were separated from Christ; he can never again with clerical arrogance set himself apart from the world. (98)

98) Ethics, p. 177.

The Church as the body of Christ does not intend to separate from the world but to summon the world into the fellowship of this body of Christ. Even though the Church and the world are different from each other. Here Bonhoeffer uses the terms of "the four mandates" to explain their distinction.

The section on "The Four Mandates" is quite unique in the Ethics. After mentioning that the world is relative to Christ, he claims as follows:

This relativeness of the world to Christ assumes concrete form in certain mandates of God in the world. The Scriptures name four such mandates: labour, marriage, government and the Church. (99)

He uses the term "mandate" in distinction from the term "order", because the term "mandate" refers more clearly to a divinely imposed task rather than to a determination of being. The first three are not secular in contradistinction to the fourth, but all are equally divine by virtue of their original and final relation to Christ.

The mandates of labour and marriage confront the first man after creation, and both permit man to share in God's creative power for the glory and service of Christ. Because both mandates are to be carried out by the race of Cain, however, a shadow falls from the outset on all human labour and on marriage and the family in this our world.

99) Ethics, p. 179.

The divine mandate of government presupposes those of labour and marriage; unlike them, it is not creative, but functions to preserve what has been created. Thus the governing authority is not the performer but the witness and guarantor of marriage; it is not the administrator but the inspector and supervisor of labour. The task of the governing authority is to preserve the world for the reality of Jesus Christ by law and force. For Christ's sake we must obey to this governing authority.

The divine mandate of the Church differs from the other three. It is the task of enabling the reality of Jesus Christ to become real in the preaching and organization of the Church and the Christian life. The mandate of the Church extends to all mankind by overlapping of the three mandates, so that now it is the Christian who is at once labourer, partner in marriage, and subject of a government. It is not permitted to divide them into separate spheres:

The whole man stands before the whole earthly and eternal reality, the reality which God has prepared for him in Jesus Christ. (100)

Man can live up to this reality only by responding fully to the totality of the offer and the claim.

At the end of the chapter Bonhoeffer returns to his earlier affirmation that instead of asking how one can

100) Ethics, pp. 182-183.

be good and do good, one must ask what is the will of God. His answer is:

The will of God is nothing other than the becoming real of the reality of Christ with us and in our world. (101)

The will of God is not an idea still to be realized, nor is it simply identical with what is in being. It is not something hidden and unfulfilled, but something that has become manifest and that has already been fulfilled by God in his reconciliation of the world with himself in Christ. Thus the purpose of ethics is to participate in the reality of the fulfilled will of God:

But this participation, too, is possible only in virtue of the fact that I myself am already included in the fulfillment of the will of God in Christ, which means that I am reconciled with God. (102)

Therefore, faith in Jesus Christ is the sole fountain-head of all good, the will of God.

D. Fourth Part

"History and Good" and "The 'Ethical' and 'Christian' as a Theme" are involved in this part.

Bonhoeffer begins the former chapter with the assertion that the question of good is ultimately connected with the fact that we are alive:

The question of good is posed and is decided in the midst of each definite, yet unconcluded, unique and transient situation of our lives, in

101) Ethics, p. 183.

102) op. cit., p. 184.

the midst of our living relationships with men, things, institutions and powers, in other words in the midst of our historical existence. The question of good cannot now be separated from the question of life, the question of history. (103)

This means that our ethical thought must be not abstract but concrete. So our question is life itself. Jesus said: "I am the life" (John 14:6, 11:25) and this declaration makes clear that we can only live life but cannot define it. Life is not a thing, an entity or concept, but a particular and unique person.

The question of what is life gives place to the answer who is life. (104)

By saying "I am the life", Jesus binds the life to the person of Jesus. In proclaiming this, Jesus says our life is outside ourselves and in Him. He explains that we have fallen away from life and we must hear the negation of our life. This negation, the "no" to our fallen life, brings us to the end, to death, but precisely in this bringing the "no" becomes a mysterious "yes", the affirmation of the new life in Christ. The human being lives now in tension between the negation and the affirmation, and only in this tension do we recognize Christ as our life.

It is the 'yes' of creation, atonement and redemption, and the 'no' of the condemnation

103) Ethics, p. 185.

104) op. cit., p. 188.

and death of the life which has fallen away from its origin, its essence and its goal. But no one who knows Christ can hear the 'yes' without the 'no' or the 'no' without the 'yes'. (105)

Returning to the question of good, he maintains that good is not a quality of life, but is life itself, life in the sense of the saying "Christ is my life" (Phil. 1:21). To be good (gut sein) is to live (leben). This life assumes concrete form in the contradictory unity of "yes" and "no", which life finds outside itself in Jesus Christ, but because Jesus Christ is both man and God in one, humanity and God have thereby become integrally related to one another for eternity. He explains the motifs as follows:

Man is the man who was accepted in the incarnation of Christ, who was loved, condemned and reconciled in Christ; and God is God become man. There is no relation to men without a relation to God, and no relation to God without a relation to men, and it is only our relation to Jesus Christ which provides the basis for our relation to men and to God. ...

We live by responding to the word of God which is addressed to us in Jesus Christ. Since this word is addressed to our entire life, the response, too, can only be an entire one. (106)

He uses the term "responsibility" (Verantwortung) to characterize our response (Antwort) to the life of Jesus Christ as the "yes" and "no" to our life. Responsibility in this context involves the total and unified

105) Ethics, p. 190.

106) op. cit., p. 192.

response of one's whole life, so that one's action becomes a matter of life and death. Responsibility in the biblical sense is, in the first place, a verbal response given at the risk of man's life to the question asked by another man with regard to the event of Christ (II Tim. 4:16, I Pet. 3:15, Phil. 1:7, 17).¹⁰⁷ In answering, one stands for Christ before men and for men before Christ.

"The Structure of Responsible Life". In this section he states that the structure of responsibility is conditioned by two factors; firstly, that life is bound to man and to God, and secondly, that a man's own life is free. Without this obligatory bond and without this freedom, there is no responsibility. He defines responsibility:

The obligation assumes the form of deputyship (Stellvertretung) and of correspondence with reality (Wirklichkeitsgemaessheit); freedom displays itself in the self-examination (Selbstpruefung) of life and of action in the venture of a concrete decision. (108)

Deputyship may be illustrated by reference to a father who acts, works, cares and intercedes for his children. He is obliged to act in their place and thus unavoidably assumes the role of their deputy or

107) See Ethics, p. 193.

108) op. cit., p. 194.

representative. It is Bonhoeffer's conviction that there is no man who can avoid deputyship. For even the solitary lives as a deputy for his own self, and that means for mankind in general. However, the full meaning of deputyship is revealed to us only in the life of Jesus Christ, who lived and acted and suffered death for all men. Deputyship, and therefore also responsibility, consists in a total surrender of one's own life to the other man. Only the selfless man lives responsibly.

The responsible life must correspond with reality. This means that man's responsible conduct does not arise from some pre-established principle, but from the given situation. He warns that the concept of correspondence with reality must not be understood in the sense of that "servile conviction in the face of the fact (Nietzsche)".¹⁰⁹ This is just the contrary of responsibility. He explains:

In action which is genuinely in accordance with reality there is an indissoluble link between the acknowledgement and the contradiction of the factual. The reason for this is that reality is first and last not lifeless; but it is the real man, the incarnate God. ...

It is from this action of God, from the real man, from Jesus Christ, that reality now receives its 'yes' and its 'no', its right and its limitations. Affirmation and contradiction are now conjoined in the concrete action of him who has recognized the real man. (110)

109) Ethics, p. 198.

110) op. cit., pp. 198-199.

Thus he concludes that the action which is in accordance with Christ is the action which is in accordance with reality and the origin of such action is the incarnate God Jesus who has accepted man and who has loved, condemned and reconciled man and with him the world.

Therefore Christian principle does not oppose the secular principle. He states:

It is now no longer established in advance what is 'Christian' and what is 'secular'; both of these are recognized, with their special qualities and with their unity, only in the concrete responsibility of action which springs from the reconciliation that has been effected in Jesus Christ. (111)

The world is the sphere of concrete responsibility which is given to us and through Jesus Christ. We must, therefore, live and act in limited responsibility and thereby allow the world ever anew to disclose its essential character to him. Responsible action is limited, firstly by our creatureliness, and secondly by our recognition of the responsibility of the other man. Our responsibility is neither infinite nor absolute, but always stands under the ultimate judgement and grace of God and within the boundary drawn by our neighbour's own responsibility. It is precisely this limitation which makes our action a responsible one.

Then the author turns his eyes to the realm of "things". He calls the relation between responsible

111) Ethics, p. 202.

man and things "pertinence" (Sachgemaessheit). That has two implications. First, that attitude to things is pertinent which keeps steadily in view their original, essential and purposive relation to God and to men. Second, from its origin there is inherent in every thing its own law of being (Wesensgesetz), no matter whether this thing is a natural object or a product of the human mind, and no matter whether it is a material or an ideal entity.

Bonhoeffer points out there comes a time in his-
torical life when the exact observance of a formal law comes into conflict with the ineluctable necessities of the lives of man. In such a case of extreme necessity, the responsible man is faced with the ques-
tion of ultima ratio, i.e., an action that lies beyond the law of reason. He states that in such an abnormal situation, the man is called forth to make decision as a free venture that openly admits the violation of law. Yet precisely in this breaking of the law the validity of the law is acknowledged and one's action entrusted unreservedly to the divine governance of history.

The structure of responsible action includes readi-
ness to accept both guilt and freedom.

Jesus took upon Himself the guilt of all men, and for that reason every man who acts responsibly becomes guilty. ... Through Jesus Christ it becomes an essential part of responsible action that the man who is without sin loves selflessly and for

that reason incurs guilt. (112)

He recognizes that those who invoke the authority of conscience will oppose this statement. Then he picks up the problem of conscience. He argues that conscience comes as an indictment of one's loss of unity with his own self. Primarily it is directed not towards a particular kind of doing but towards a particular mode of being. Then he asks what constitutes this unity?

The first constituent is the man's own ego in its claim to be 'like God', *sicut deus*, in the knowledge of good and evil. The call of conscience in natural man is the attempt on the part of the ego to justify itself in its knowledge of good and evil before God, before men and before itself, and to secure its own continuance in this self-justification. Finding no firm support in its own contingent individuality the ego traces its own derivation back to a universal law of good and seeks to achieve unity with itself in conformity with this law. (113)

However the man of faith finds unity beyond his own ego and its law in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is our conscience. True unity can be found in the surrender of the ego to God and to other men. Jesus Christ sets conscience free for the service of God and of our neighbour. The responsible action, which enters into the guilt of another man for the other's sake, indirectly shares in the action of Jesus Christ.

Even though conscience and responsibility unite in

112) Ethics, p. 210.

113) op. cit., pp. 211-212.

this matter, they continue to confront one another in a relation of irreducible tension. In the first place, the conscience which is set free in Christ does not abandon to unity with myself. So there is a limit to the amount of guilt that conscience will permit a person to carry without breaking under the weight; care should be taken that the pursuit of responsible action does not lead to the destruction of man's unity with himself. Secondly, the conscience which is set free in Christ must still reckon with the law of life, which is known, at least in a distorted and perverted way, by the natural conscience. Thus there arises a conflict between a conscience and concrete responsibility. In this situation ultimate unity can be gained only by a free decision for Christ, who is indeed the foundation, essence and goal of concrete responsibility, and also the Lord of conscience.

Thus responsibility is bound by conscience,
but conscience is set free by responsibility.
(114)

He concludes the analysis of the structure of responsible action by thinking of "freedom".

Responsibility and freedom are corresponding concepts. Factually, though not chronologically, responsibility presupposes freedom and freedom can consist only in responsibility. Responsibility

114) Ethics, p. 216.

is the freedom of men which is given only in the obligation to God and to our neighbour. (115)

To act responsibly means to act in freedom of his own self. And this responsible action is performed in the obligation which alone gives freedom, the obligations to God and to our neighbour as they confront us in Jesus Christ. Therefore it is exactly the free man who ultimately commits his action to the guidance of God. Those who abandon of knowledge of their own good perform the good of God.

Here Bonhoeffer discusses the relationship between free responsibility and obedience. It seems at first sight the former category is applicable only to those who have some responsible position in life and the latter to the common people who lives in an unexciting workday world. If so there are two ethics, one for the great and the strong, for the rulers, and another for the small and the weak, for the subordinates. However, he indicates that:

Even when free responsibility is more or less excluded from a man's vocational and public life, He nevertheless always stands in a responsible relation to other men; these relations extend from his family to his workmates. The fulfilment of genuine responsibility at this point affords the only sound possibility of extending the sphere of responsibility once more into vocational and public life. (116)

115) Ethics, pp. 216-217.

116) op. cit., p. 219.

Furthermore he points out the fact that responsibility does not only stand side by side with relationship of obedience; it has its place within these relationships. In the actual situation obedience and responsibility are closely interlinked and obedience is rendered in responsibility. There is a tension between obedience and freedom; both are realized in responsibility. The responsible man delivers up himself and his deed to God.

The final section of this chapter is "The Place of Responsibility". He discusses the concept of the calling (Beruf). It is his conviction that the biblical concept of the calling has nothing to do with Max Weber's definition in terms of a "limited field of accomplishments" (als abgegrenztes Gebiet von Leistungen) or with the pseudo-Lutheran view which simply provides the justification and sanctification of secular institution. According to the Bible it concerns the gracious calling of God to live in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. Man does not seek out grace in its own place, but grace seeks and finds man in his place. This visitation of man by grace occurred in the incarnation, and it is still occurring in the world of Jesus Christ which is brought by the Holy Ghost. Only through this call can one live a life justified before God. This life is my calling from the standpoint of Christ, and it is my responsibility from my own standpoint.

The author criticizes two disastrous misunderstandings: secular Protestantism which identified the calling with the loyal discharge of worldly obligations, and medieval monasticism which attempted to find a place withdrawn from the world where the call could be answered more appropriately. Jesus Christ calls man to unite in concrete responsibility the "yes" and the "no" to life in the world. Therefore Bonhoeffer states the place of one's responsibility is determined by the call of Jesus Christ which is addressed to us. He explains it by referring to Luther.

Luther's return from the monastery to the world, to the 'calling', is, in the true New Testament sense, the fiercest attack and assault to be launched against the world since primitive Christianity. Now a man takes up his position against the world in the world; the calling is the place at which the call of Christ is answered, the place at which a man lives responsibly. Thus the task which is appointed for me in my calling is a limited one, but at the same time the responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ breaks through all limits. (117)

The final chapter is entitled "The 'Ethical' and the 'Christian' as a Theme."

He starts with these words:

We cannot, in fact, even set foot in the field of Christian ethics until we have first of all recognized how extremely questionable a course we are pursuing if we take the 'ethical'

117) Ethics, pp. 223-224.

and the 'Christian' as a theme for our consideration or discussion or even as a subject for scientific exposition. (118)

He asserts that the 'ethical' as a theme is bound to a definite time and a definite place, namely, the sphere of everyday happenings. But the general moral principles overlook this fact and misunderstand man's nature of creaturely existence, so they are completely inadequate and unfitting. The so-called 'ethical phenomenon' must have its place in the life of man. It would be, however, destructive of creaturely wholeness of life if the unconditional character of the experience of obligation is taken to imply an exclusive and all-embracing claim.

To confine the ethical phenomenon to its proper place and time is not to invalidate it; it is, on the contrary, to render it fully operative. (119)

According to Bonhoeffer 'shall' or 'should' is always an ultimate word. The morality simply 'goes without saying,' and the ethical phenomenon is strictly a peripheral event. 'Shall' and 'should' make themselves heard only when fellowship is disrupted or organization is endangered, and as soon as order is restored they have nothing more to say.

118) Ethics, p. 231.

119) op. cit., p. 233.

Then he moves to the topic of what is an ethic and an ethicist. He says:

An ethic cannot be a book in which there is set out how everything in the world actually ought to be but unfortunately is not, and an ethicist cannot be a man who always knows better than others what is to be done and how it is to be done. (120)

On the contrary, the essential task of ethics and ethicists is by speaking strictly from the standpoint of the 'ethical', from the standpoint of the peripheral event of 'shall' and 'should', to help people to learn to share in life:

To share in life within the bounds of 'shall' and 'should' (not, however, from the motives of 'shall' and 'should') in the abundant fulness of the concrete tasks and processes of life with all their infinite multiplicity of different motives. (121)

He then discusses the problem of the warrant (Ermaechtigung) for ethical discourse. He explains delicate implications very frankly. He insists that it is inherent and essential in the ethical, that there is a direction from the superior to the inferior. He even says without the courage to accept the superiority which modern man has so completely lost, ethical discourse is dissipated in generalities. Because in ethical discourse it is the problem not only of what is said but also of who says it:

120) Ethics, p. 236.

121) op. cit., p. 237.

Ethical discourse, therefore, is not a system of propositions which are correct in themselves, a system which is available for anyone to apply at any time and in any place, but it is inseparably linked with particular persons, times and places. (122)

The ethical already implies a definite structure of human society and certain concrete sociological relations which involve authority.

He picks up the theme of "The Commandment of God", because it is the only possible object of a 'Christian ethic' which lies beyond the 'ethical'. It is his conviction that:

God's commandment is the only warrant for ethical discourse. The commandment of God is the total and concrete claim laid to man by the merciful and holy God in Jesus Christ. (123)

God's commandment is not an abstract principle or a timeless truth, but in both content and form, it is the concrete speech of God to the concrete man. The concreteness of the divine commandment consists in its historicity. He states simply and clearly--even at the risk of a misunderstanding--that:

God's commandment, which is manifested in Jesus Christ, comes to us in the Church, in the family, in labour and in government. (124)

It is his important presupposition that God's commandment is and always remains that which is made

122) Ethics, pp. 238-239.

123) op. cit., p. 244.

124) op. cit., p. 245.

manifest in Jesus Christ. This means that it does not spring from the created world, but comes down from above. Since God's commandment is the commandment that is revealed in Christ, it means no single authority, among those which are authorized to proclaim the commandment, can claim to be absolute. It is always concrete speech to somebody, it embraces the whole of life, and it is the permission to live as man before God. For Bonhoeffer the commandment of God is not only, like the ethical, keep watch on the untransgressable frontier of life, but it is at the same time the centre and the fullness of life, permission, freedom and positive recognition to live as a man before God. So he proclaims that before the commandment of God man no longer stands at the cross-roads or stands always before it, but he can now have the right decision really behind him.

It is clear that Bonhoeffer uses the 'ethical' and the 'commandment of God' in different senses. The ethical is concerned with human life from its periphery, but God's commandment embraces the centre and fullness of life. The ethical defines only the boundary, the formal and the negative with a "thou shalt not"; the God's commandment concerns with positively "sharing in life." It is clear that the commandment of God also comprises the 'ethical', but the opposite of this proposition is never true. In a like manner, if the philosophical concept of the 'ethical' is replaced by the Biblical

concept of the 'law', the result must be that the commandment of God and the law are inseparably linked together, but that the law is comprised within the commandment, arises from it, and must be understood by reference to it.

"The Concrete Commandment and the Divine Mandates"

He begins this section with the definition of the commandment of God:

It is to be found where there are the divine mandates which are founded upon the revelation of Christ. Such mandates are the Church, marriage and the family, culture and government. (125)

He understands 'mandate' as follows:

By the term 'mandate' we understand the concrete divine commission which has its foundation in the revelation of Christ and which is evidenced by Scripture; it is the legitimation and warrant for the execution of a definite divine commandment, the conferment of divine authority on an earthly agent. ... The bearer of the mandate acts as a deputy in the place of Him who assigns him his commission. (126)

Bonhoeffer prefers to use the term 'mandate' rather than 'institution', 'order' (Ordnung), 'estate' (Stand), or 'office' (Amt), because these notions no longer connote their pristine meaning, namely, that they are divine commissions and in no sense the products of history. Therefore the commandment of God meets man always in an

125) Ethics, p. 253.

126) op. cit., p. 254.

earthly relation of authority, in a clearly defined order of superiority and inferiority. He explains the relation more closely, namely, it is not identical with an earthly relation of superior and inferior power, the divine mandate establishes not only superiority but also inferiority, and superiority and inferiority here represent a relation not of concepts or of things but of persons.

Then he emphasizes these that four mandates come into force as the commandment of God which is revealed in Jesus Christ only in conjunction, in combination and in opposition with one another.

The mandates are conjoined; otherwise they are not mandates of God. In their conjunction they are not isolated or separated from one another, but they are directed towards one another. They are 'for' one another; otherwise they are not God's mandates. Moreover, within this relation of conjunction and mutual support, each one is limited by the other; even within the relation of mutual support this limitation is necessarily experienced as a relation of mutual opposition. Wherever this mutual opposition no longer exists there is no longer a mandate of God. (127)

The discussion goes on to the mandate of the Church.¹²⁸ The commandment of God in the Church confronts men in two ways, both in public way, in the preaching of the word and in private way, in the confession or

127) Ethics, p. 257.

128) This chapter is unfinished. Unfortunately he could not reach his interpretation of the latter three mandates.

ecclesiastical discipline. Both forms of the commandment must go together. If preaching is emphasized and the confession or discipline neglected, then the commandment becomes devoid of any concrete claim (Protestantism); on the contrary, if the confession is emphasized but the preaching neglected, a legalistic casuistry will result (Catholicism). He emphasizes that two forms of the commandment in the Church are same in the sense that they are both the proclamation of divine revelation. Therefore the mandate of the Church is the mandate of proclamation (Verkuendigung). The preacher is the bearer of the office of preaching with the proclamation in the place of God and of Jesus Christ. His office "is established in the congregation and not by the congregation, and at the same time it is with the congregation."¹²⁹

The office of proclamation is inseparably bound up with Holy Scripture. And he insists without hesitation that Scripture is essentially the property or the office of preaching and that it is the preaching which properly belongs to the congregation. Scripture requires to be interpreted and preached and it is the book for preacher. This by no means implies that the Bible should be withheld from the laity. He merely wants to emphasize the essential and primary relation

129) Ethics, p. 259.

of the Scripture to the office of proclamation. The preacher proclaims Christ as the Lord and Saviour of the world on the basis of Holy Scripture to both believers and unbelievers. Likewise he proclaims same commandment for the Church and the world.

The Church proclaims Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son; this means that no created thing can be conceived or understood apart from Christ, the Mediator of creation.

Jesus Christ, the incarnate God; this means that God has taken upon himself bodily all human being, that henceforwards divine being cannot be found otherwise than in human form, that in Jesus Christ man is made free to be really man before God, that God does not wish to exist for himself but for us.

Jesus Christ, the crucified Reconciler; this means that whole world has become godless by its rejection of Jesus Christ, what it is precisely this godless world which has been reconciled to God, that only through the proclamation of Christ crucified is a life in genuine worldliness possible.

Jesus Christ, the risen and ascended Lord; this means that he has overcome sin and death, that he is the living Lord to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, that all the powers of the world are made subject to him and must serve him, that his commandment sets creation free for the fulfilment of the law which

is its own, that is to say, the law which is inherent in it by virtue of its having its origin, its goal and its essence in Jesus Christ.¹³⁰

Here Bonhoeffer indicates an important point. The name of Jesus Christ, whom the Church proclaims, does not only designate an individual man, but embraces at the same time the whole of human nature. In Jesus Christ is the new humanity, the congregation of God, so that through him the word of God and the congregation of God are indissolubly linked together. Therefore where Jesus Christ is proclaimed in accordance with the divine mandate, there is the congregation, Church. He explains that:

The word of God, proclaimed by virtue of a divine mandate, dominates and rules the entire world; the 'community' which comes into being around this word does not dominate the world, but it stands entirely in the service of the fulfilment of the divine mandate. (131)

The Church has her own law, and this can never become the law of the worldly order, conversely the law of a worldly order can never become the law of this community. Yet both are subject to the Lordship of Christ.

The Church as a self-contained community fulfills its mandate of proclamation in two ways. First by being

130) See Ethics, pp.262-264.

131) op. cit., p. 265.

a means to an end, that is, the Church organizes herself to be an effective instrument for the proclamation of Christ. Secondly by being an end in itself, that is, through the congregations's action on behalf of the world its purpose is achieved, the congregation has become the goal and centre of all God's dealing with the world.

He concludes his argument by clarifying the meaning of his characteristic word "deputyship" (Stellvertretung).

The concept of deputyship characterizes this twofold relationship most clearly. The Christian congregation stands at the point at which the whole world ought to be standing; to this extent it serves as deputy for the world and exists for the sake of the world. On the other hand, the world achieves its own fulfilment at the point at which the congregation stands. The earth is the 'new creation', the 'new creature', the goal of the ways of God on earth. The congregation stands in this twofold relation of deputyship entirely in the fellowship and discipleship of its Lord, who was Christ precisely in this, that He existed not for His own sake but wholly for the sake of the world. (132)

We must now undertake a survey of the fundamental motifs in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Ethics.

132) Ethics, p. 266.

CHAPTER THREE

A SURVEY OF THE FUNDAMENTAL MOTIFS OF BONHOEFFER'S ETHICS

According to A. Damas, the central motif of Bonhoeffer's Ethics is to "search for the concrete character of the divine commandment, understood as the structure of this world rather than the ideal possibility of some other world."¹ In other words, it is to make clear God's concrete commandments in the midst of reality.

This chapter is devoted to describing the fundamental motifs of the Ethics by examining several important and characteristic conceptions.

I. CONFORMATION

For Bonhoeffer, ethics has its foundation in the encounter with Christ, the Incarnate, the Crucified, the Risen One. That Christ takes form among us and we are conformed with him is the fundamental thought of his ethics.

Out of love for man God becomes man. He does not seek out the most perfect man in order to unite Himself with him, but He takes human character upon Himself as it is. Jesus Christ is not the transfiguration of sublime humanity. He is the 'yes' which God addresses to the real man. Not the dispassionate 'yes' of the judge, but the merciful 'yes' of Him who has compassion. In this 'yes' there is comprised the whole life and the whole hope of the world. (2)

Therefore he intended to begin the Ethics with the

1) A. Damas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theologian of Reality, trans. by R. M. Brown, London, 1971, p. 140.

2) Ethics, P. 53.

section entitled "Ethics as Formation". It is the task of Christian ethics to investigate how Christ is formed in us today and here. It does not mean that man becomes like Jesus, but that the form of Jesus Christ itself works upon us in such a manner that it moulds our form in its own likeness.³ Conformation with Christ is a structural conception of responsible behaviour in the ethical situation. To be conformed with Christ must be considered concretely, the Christ who is Incarnate, Crucified and Risen.

Because Christ is the Incarnate it is man's right and duty that man should be man. The quest for the superman, i.e., the endeavour to outgrow the man within the man, the pursuit of the heroic, the cult of the demigod must be rejected.

To be conformed with the Incarnate is to have the right to be the man one really is. (4)

Because Christ is the Crucified, conformation to Him means being a man sentenced by God. Man accepts the judgement upon himself. He dies every day the death of a sinner before God. He bears all the sufferings that comes to him, in the knowledge that it serves to enable him to die to his own will.

3) See Gal. 4:19.

4) Ethics, p. 62.

In surrendering himself to God's judgement upon him and against him he is himself just in the eyes of God. (5)

Because Christ is the Risen One, conformation to Christ means to be a new man before God. This newness, however, is hidden with Christ in God. Man lives as a new man in the midst of death, sin and the old.

The new man lives in the world like any other man. Often there is little to distinguish him from the rest. Nor does he attach importance to distinguishing himself, but only to distinguishing Christ for the sake of his brethren. Transfigured though he is in the form of the Risen One, here he bears only the sign of the cross and the judgement. (6)

Man is not transformed into the form of God, but into his own form, the form which is essentially proper to him. As God became man, man becomes man. It is correct to say that Bonhoeffer's ethics is an ethics of the cross rather than an ethics of glory.⁷ Conformation is not achieved by merits of efforts to become like Jesus Christ, but only by being drawn into the form of Him.

The place of this conformation is in the Church. He insists that: the Church is Christ Himself who has taken form among us; the Church is nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has really taken form; the Church is the man in Christ, incarnate, sentenced and

5) Ethics, p. 62.

6) op. cit., p. 63.

7) cf. George W. Forell: "Realized Faith, the Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer" in The Place of Bonhoeffer, ed. by M. E. Marty, p. 213.

awakened to new life. This is the starting point of Christian ethics.

Since Christian ethics is an ethics of the cross, the Church is not set up as a model for the world. On the contrary, the Church bears the form which is in truth the proper form of all humanity, Bonhoeffer even declares that "what matters in the Church is not religion but the form of Christ, and its taking form amidst a band of men."⁸

Thus the problem of how Christ is formed among us here and now becomes urgent. He understands this hic et nunc not only as the issue of the individual and un-repeatable ethical situation but also in relation to the collective person. He develops his thought as follows:

But the question of how Christ takes form among us here and now, or how we are conformed with His form, contains within itself still further difficult questions. What do we mean by 'among us', 'now' and 'here'? If it is impossible to establish for all times and places what is good, then the question still arises for what times and places can any answer at all be given to our enquiry. It must not remain in doubt for a single moment that any one section to which we may now turn our attention is to be regarded precisely as a section, as a part of the whole of humanity. In every section of his history man is simply and entirely the man taken upon Himself by Christ. And for this reason whatever may have to be said about this section will always refer not only to this part but also to the whole. However, we must now answer the question regarding the times and places of which we are thinking when we set out to speak of formation through the form of Christ.

8) Ethics, p. 64.

These are in the first place quite generally the times and places which in some way concern us, those of which we have experience and which are reality for us. They are the times and places which confront us with concrete problems, set us tasks and charge us with responsibility. The 'among us', the 'now' and 'here' is therefore the region of our decisions and encounters. This region undoubtedly varies very greatly in extent according to the individual, and it might consequently be supposed that these definitions could in the end be interpreted so widely and vaguely as to make room for unrestrained individualism. What prevents this is the fact that by our history we are set objectively in a definite nexus of experiences, responsibilities and decisions from which we cannot free ourselves again except by an abstraction. We live, in fact, within this nexus, whether or not we are in every respect aware of it. (9)

In ethics there are both individual situations and collective situations, in other words, individuals are inescapably involved in collective situations.

According to Bonhoeffer's presentation this is the realm in the history of mankind which up to now has been palpably stamped in an exceptional way by the event of Christ. Here Christ for the first time has begun to take form in the visible history of mankind. (10)

It is possible to speak of how Christ is able to take form among us within the framework of a collective situation. Ethics should think and teach not unhistorically, rather for a definite situation. The ethicist seeks in a certain way representatively to know the nature and the demands of the collective situation, he gives the teaching representatively for his contemporaries who stand

9) Ethics, pp. 66-67.

10) H. Ott: Reality and Faith, The Theological Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, trans. by A. A. Morrison, London, 1971, p. 274.

with him in the same complex of history.

Ethics as formation is possible only upon the foundation of the form of Jesus Christ which is present in His Church. The Church is the place where Jesus Christ's taking form is proclaimed and accomplished. It is this proclamation and this event that Christian ethics is designed to serve. (11)

At the same time the thought of conformation includes a strong element of the personal. It means that the ethics of conformation is not a matter of the realization of ideas and principles, or of abstract duties, virtues and values, but of encounter with a concrete person.

By such a personalizing of ethics Bonhoeffer seeks to reach that concreteness which forces itself upon ethical thought. (12)

This encounter, needless to say, arises always with the same person, that is the person of Jesus Christ. Such a personalizing of ethics overcomes not only abstract ethics but also casuistry and formalism. Casuistry, which depends upon general principles, is overcome because a person is not anything general and unhistorical, but can only encounter in concrete historical situations every time. The formalism of a pure situation ethic is overcome because a definite concrete content runs through all situations.

For the ethics of conformation the concept of reality has an important meaning. We shall discuss

11) Ethics, p. 68.

12) H. Ott: Reality and Faith, The Theological Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 277.

the reality in detail later. Bonhoeffer insists that Jesus Christ who seeks to take form among us is the reality in all realities of ethical situations. Therefore when a person becomes conformed with Him he is also in keeping with reality. It is an important task of Christian ethics to discern, and therefore enable the Christian to be open to the sustaining reality of Christ, the Reconciler in the reality of each situation.

II. PENULTIMATE AND ULTIMATE

Bonhoeffer's conviction that it is the reality of God in Jesus Christ who entered into the reality of this world, means that he no longer desires "Christ without the world or the world without Christ."¹³ This may be shown in the differentiation of ultimate and penultimate which is characteristic of his Ethics.

The justifying word is the final word of God in the qualitative sense of the non plus ultra: "There is nothing that goes beyond a life which is justified before God."¹⁴ He begins the section entitled "The Penultimate" as these words.

Justification by grace and faith alone remains in every respect the final word and for this reasons, when we speak of the things before the last, we

13) Ethics, p. 169.

14) op. cit., p. 100.

must not speak of them as having any value of their own, but we must bring to light their relation to the ultimate. (15)

The relationship between the ultimate and the penultimate is defined in such a way that they are neither in absolute contrast to one another, nor is there a compromise in which the ultimate is finally eradicated. Both positions would be against Christ.

In Him alone lies the solution for the problem of the relation between the ultimate and the penultimate.

In Jesus Christ we have faith in the incarnate, crucified and risen God. In the incarnation we learn of the love of God for His creation; in the crucifixion we learn of the judgement of God upon all flesh; and in the resurrection we learn of God's will for a new world. (16)

In this unity of Christ's event, the penultimate is neither sanctioned nor destroyed. The penultimate must not be dispensed with for the sake of the ultimate, for it ensures the eschatological character of the eschatological. The dimension of the penultimate, of history, of exterior life is permeated, ordered, and arranged by the divine mandates. In these mandates God's final word gets concrete form and embodiment. The time of the penultimate has its place in salvation history and it is the time granted to prepare the way for the coming of Christ. Thus the penultimate is nothing in itself; it cannot justify itself. The penultimate cannot determine

15) Ethics, p. 103.

16) op. cit., p. 108.

the ultimate rather it is the ultimate which determines and directs the penultimate. This is why the penultimate has to be taken seriously despite its provisional character. In regard to man, therefore, he must not be robbed of his humanity or be destroyed. For "only man can be justified, precisely because only he who is justified becomes 'man'."¹⁷ The ultimate word, which is justification, turns the believer towards the penultimate, which is natural life and the whole cultural enterprise, since the God of grace commands us not to look for him on the edges but to meet him in the middle of the world. The ultimate is not found at the edge of the world, but in its centre as a way of structuring the penultimate. He says:

Now from this there follows something which is of crucial importance. For the sake of the ultimate the penultimate must be preserved. Any arbitrary destruction of the penultimate will do serious injury to the ultimate. If, for example, a human life is deprived of the conditions which are proper to it, then the justification of such a life by grace and faith, if it is not rendered impossible, is at least seriously impeded. ... It is necessary to see to it that the penultimate, too, is provided with the preaching of the ultimate word of God, the proclamation of the justification of the sinner by grace alone, lest the destruction of the penultimate should prove a hindrance to the ultimate. (18)

From this standpoint, Bonhoeffer pays careful attention to the natural, which he prefers to the substantive "nature," a word so charged with traditional

17) Ethics, p. 111.

18) op. cit., p. 111.

meanings that it suggests a second way of immanent knowledge of the will of God the Creator, parallel to revelation.¹⁹ He uses the word "natural", not naturalistic, as opposed, not to "artificial", but to "christological". The concept of the natural has been neglected in the Protestant tradition. It had no place in Protestant thought and only Catholic ethics thinks seriously about nature. Bonhoeffer insists that this is a serious and substantial loss to Protestant thought and tries to rediscover the meaning of the natural.

The concept of the natural must, therefore, be recovered on the basis of the gospel. We speak of the natural, as distinct from the creaturely, in order to take into account the fact of the Fall; and we speak of the natural rather than of the sinful so that we may include in it the creaturely. The natural is that which, after the Fall, is directed towards the coming of Christ. The unnatural is that which, after the Fall, closes its doors against the coming of Christ. There is indeed only a relative difference between that which is directed towards Christ and that which closes its doors to Christ; for the natural does not compel the coming of Christ, and the unnatural does not render it impossible. In both cases the real coming is an event of grace. And it is only through the coming of Christ that the natural is confirmed in its character as a penultimate, and that the unnatural is exposed once and for all as destruction of the penultimate. Thus, even in the sight of Christ, there is a distinction between the natural and the unnatural, a distinction which cannot be obliterated without doing grave harm. (20)

19) See A. Dumas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theologian of Reality, p. 159.

20) Ethics, p. 120-121.

As has been pointed out,²¹ Bonhoeffer used the term "order of preservation" in 1932 in contrast to the "order of creation." By this term he meant the whole world order of fallen creation, as directed solely towards Christ, towards the new creation. The reason why he refused to use of "order of creation" was that each worldly institution is founded by God, and therefore it can be recognized and appreciated only in the light of God's revelation in Christ. In Ethics, however, he drops the term "order of preservation" too. He recognizes that this term is equally open to misuse at that time, "because the preservation of the world is a rational notion, not identical with 'relative justification' which experiences the penultimate and its institutions in the incarnation of Christ -- the 'entering of God' into the reality of the world."²²

Thus the natural exists not only for Christ but Christ himself exists for the natural life in this world.

In relation to Jesus Christ the status of life as an end in itself is understood as creaturehood, and its status as a means to an end is understood as participation in the kingdom of God; while within the framework of the natural life, the fact

21) See Chapter Two, pp. 54ff.

22) J. Moltmann: "The Lordship of Christ and Human Society" in Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer, trans. by R.H. Fuller and I. Fuller, p. 81.

that life is an end in itself finds expression in the rights with which life is endowed, and the fact that life is a means to an end finds expression in the duties which are imposed on it. (23)

The natural is the form of life preserved by God after its fall. It is not something which is determined by any single part or any single authority within the fallen world. Therefore it cannot be justified in terms of the history of salvation as the "preservation" of the world and as a means to an end. Natural life must not be understood as a preliminary stage for the life with Christ, since it receives its validation from Christ Himself. Christ himself entered into the world, that is the natural life, and through him the natural life becomes the penultimate which is directed towards the ultimate. Only on this basis we have the right to call others to the natural life and to live the natural life ourselves. The penultimate must be respected because it is preserved and sustained by God for the coming of Christ.

On the conviction that "so long as life continues, the natural will always reassert itself",²⁴ Bonhoeffer develops a detailed exposition of natural rights and duties as well as natural relationships between man and

23) Ethics, p. 126.

24) op. cit., p. 124.

man. In the section entitled as "The Right to Bodily Life" he defends the legitimacy of bodily pleasures such as those of sex, food, recreation, and discusses the problems of corporal punishment, torture, euthanasia, murder, suicide, and birth control. The discussion begins with these words.

Bodily life, which we receive without any action on our own part, carries within itself the right to its own preservation. This is not a right that we have justly or unjustly appropriated to ourselves, but it is in the strictest sense an 'innate' right, one which we have passively received and which pre-exists our will, a right which rests upon the nature of things as they are. Since it is God's will that there should be human life on earth only in the form of bodily life, it follows that it is for the sake of the whole man that the body possesses the right to be preserved. (25)

Bodily life, like life in general, is not only a means to an end but also an end in itself. According to Christian ethics the thought that the body is only the prison from which the immortal soul is released for ever by death must be rejected, for it is God's will that man is a bodily being and bodiliness is entitled to be called an end in itself. The positive attitude to the life of the body is expressed clearly and concretely in these sentences.

The homes of men are not, like the shelters of animals, merely the means of protection against bad weather and the night or merely places for rearing the young; they are places in which a man may relish the joys of his personal life in the

25) Ethics, p. 131.

intimacy and security of his family and of his property. Eating and drinking do not merely serve the purpose of keeping the body in good health, but they afford natural joy in bodily living. Clothing is not intended merely as a mean covering for the body, but also as an adornment of the body. Recreation is not designed solely to increase working efficiency, but it provides the body with its due measure of repose and enjoyment. Play is by its nature remote from all subordination to purpose, and it thus demonstrates most clearly that the life of the body is an end in itself. Sex is not only the means of reproduction, but, independently of this defined purpose, it brings with it its own joy, in married life, in the love of two human beings for one another. From all this it emerges that the meaning of bodily life never lies solely in its subordination to its final purpose. The life of the body assumes its full significance only with the fulfilment of its inherent claim to joy.

(26)

Corporal punishment is only correct for the case of the person who is not yet independent and through this punishment may develop independence.

Torture inflicts the most extreme dishonour on the human being, and consequently engenders an intense hatred and the natural bodily impulse to restore this wounded honour by the application of bodily force, and it destroys the foundation of the fellowship of human society.

The first right of natural life consists in the safeguarding of the life of the body against arbitrary killing. (27)

26) Ethics, p. 133.

27) op. cit., p. 134.

The problem of euthanasia is a difficult one. However Bonhoeffer, insists, first of all, "killing and keeping alive are never of equal value in the taking of this decision; the sparing of life has an incomparably higher claim than killing can have."²⁸ Admitting the destruction of other's lives is fundamentally to deny the work of God as Creator and Preserver of life. The answer must be negative to any request for termination of the life, even for the incurably sick.

It is also not permitted to judge the right of life on the basis of the usefulness to society of the person. Rationalistic thinking of modern times often is based on an assumption that every life must possess a certain utilizable value for the community and that when this utility ceases the life has no right to exist. Against this assumption, the Bible proclaims that in the sight of God there is no life that is not worth preserving, for the right to live is the essence, and not the value of life. God, the Creator, Preserver and Redeemer of life, makes each life, even the most wretched life in the sight of human being, worth living before Him.

It cannot be denied that serious incurable or hereditary diseases constitute a grave problem and a certain danger for community. This danger, however,

28) Ethics, p. 136.

should not be removed by means of destroying this life. We must be ready to shoulder these unhappy lives together, through which we can appreciate our own health and realize the importance of the healthy.

Only for an exceptional borderline case, the decision would have to remain open. This must be a really special case and, needless to say, it should not be abused. Bonhoeffer concludes;

Consideration for the healthy also establishes no right to the deliberate destruction of innocent life, and from this it follows that the question regarding euthanasia must be answered in the negative. The Bible sums up this judgement in the sentence: 'The innocent ... slay thou not' (Ex. 23:7) (29)

Barth deals with the problem of euthanasia in his Church Dogmatics. He emphasizes that "the central insight in this whole complex of problems is that it is for God and God alone to make an end of human life, and that man should help in this only when he has a specific and clear command from God."³⁰ Barth and Bonhoeffer are taking the same line, and both are aware of the dangers of rationalism which will lead to the destruction of the right of all creatures to live and also of the right to life of all society.

Then he picks up the problem of suicide. The main

29) Ethics, pp. 140-141.

30) K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, III/4, p. 425.

difference between beasts and man is in the fact that man can distinguish himself from the life of his body. Man is free either to accept his life or destroy it. From the human point of view suicide is a specifically human action, for it is the ultimate and extreme self-justification of man as man, and it is a man's attempt to give a final human meaning to life which has become humanly meaningless. The actual originator of suicide is not man's despair itself but man's freedom to perform his supreme act of self-justification even in the midst of the despair. From the point of view of God, however, suicide must be said to be wrong, even if it is a specifically human action. Suicide is not a moral failing, rather it is a failing of faith. Thus suicide is only indictable by God, and not man, as it does not release man from the hand of God. God is the Maker and Master of his life and commands human's destiny. It must be noticed that the Bible does not expressly forbid suicide, but often talks about it as a consequence of extremely grave sin.

Bonhoeffer recognizes the difference between the self-killing for one's own release and for other men as a sacrifice. It is quite difficult to judge each particular case. Nevertheless, from the stand point of Christian faith it must be said there is no right of self-killing before God. He concludes;

It is not the right to life that can overcome this temptation to suicide, but only the grace which allows a man to continue to live in the knowledge of God's forgiveness. But who would venture to say that God's grace and mercy cannot embrace and sustain even a man's failure to resist this hardest of all temptations? (31)

The discussion about "Reproduction and Nascent Life" follows the same lines. He insists that for human beings marriage is based upon the personal choice by the two partners. Similarly reproduction is a personal decision, or a conscious will to have their own child, rather than a necessity of the preservation of the species. It does not, however, mean that the right of life that is to come into being is subjected to the disposal of the married couple. He warns that marriage ceases to be marriage and becomes a mere liaison without an acknowledgement of this right. The right of the new life, as well as our lives, belongs to God. An abortion, even if there are many different motives and reasons, must be considered as nothing but murder. The birth of the child is the blessing which has been bestowed upon marriage by God.

The Roman Catholic Church puts contraception and abortion in the same category, and characterizes both of them as murder.³² Bonhoeffer, however, draws the

31) Ethics, p. 147

32) See Cat. Rom. 2, 8. 13.

distinction between the consistent refusal to allow children to come of a marriage and the concrete responsible control of births.

Christian ethics should not ignore the fact that the problem of birth control, which has become such a burning question during the past hundred years, is undoubtedly connected with the increasing mastery over nature which has been achieved by technology in all fields of life and with the incontestable triumphs of technical science in the widest sense over the realm of nature. It cannot be denied the necessity of fewer births, for the total population of the world is steadily increasing because of the reduction of infant mortality and the considerable raising of the average age of the population.

Catholic morality recognizes this situation, but it permits only one means of contraception, that is total abstention. This rigorous principle comes from the Catholic thinking that it is unnatural to deliberately frustrate the reproduction which is the natural and first purpose of marriage. Bonhoeffer plainly recognizes that this is a demand which most people cannot stand, and it is unnatural for married couples to avoid bodily union. He concludes that in approaching this question it is indispensable, for the sake of marriage as a whole, that one should acknowledge a

right to full bodily union. At the same time he emphasizes that one must concede that this right of nature nevertheless requires to be exercised rationally, precisely because it is a human right.

The question of sterilization arises only in connexion with disease. In such cases to prevent unwanted births or to protect against a danger to one's own life and to the lives of others, sterilization will be the lesser evil. The Roman Catholic Church rejects sterilization entirely and prohibits the doctor from performing this operation.³³ Recognizing an infringement of the natural right of reproduction and of natural right of nascent life, Bonhoeffer prefers to take the way of the lesser evil. In other words he recognizes the penultimate character of Christian ethics. He intended to continue with sections on "The Natural Rights of the Life of the Mind" and "The Natural Right to Work and Property", but the chapter remained unfinished.

It has already been shown that Bonhoeffer's participation in the German Resistance movement was the cause of his turning his thoughts to the problem of the penultimate. His ethical thinking was formed in the conflict of the times, namely against Nazi nihilism. It was his endeavour to discern the concrete commandment of

33) cf. The papal encyclical casti connubii of 3rd December, 1930 and moral Theology.

God in the midst of that situation. The re-evaluation of the penultimate does not mean identifying the every day with the divine will. He never deifies the everyday world. For it is from Christ as Mediator of creation that the character of all created things derives.

Bonhoeffer asserts that only the Christian believer is able to live a truly natural and worldly life, since only he is free from the need to deify the world. For the Christian knows that precisely in its secularity, the world has already been accepted and redeemed by God.

Ethics denounces whatever in the everyday world destroys the reality given by God, by means of its characteristic motifs. The conception of the last things and the things before the last, ultimate and penultimate, must be understood in this context. It had not yet been developed fully, but it would be correct to see this conception as a new and unique approach in the Ethics. In it may be seen some influences from the Lutheran heritage and Catholic tradition, though its main roots are found in his understanding of the Old Testament. He understands that worldliness is a characteristic of the God of the Bible, as opposed to the other-worldliness of the gods of religion. God speaks the ultimate word in the midst of the realities of the penultimate, in other words, God's word is a concrete commandment to be recognized in the midst of reality. The ethical responsibility is our

participation in the reality that God structures on earth for the service of man. For the last word of ethics is that the sinner is finally reconciled with grace, and the existence of man with the reality of God.

The uniqueness of Bonhoeffer's Ethics in comparison with other systems of ethics is that instead of emphasizing the dilemmas and conflicts between the ideal and what exists, he emphasizes the will to work towards the unity of reconciliation that Christ has already achieved, in all walks of life, both natural and cultural.

What can and must be said is not what is good once and for all, but the way in which Christ takes form among us here and now. (35)

34) cf. Edmond Grin: "Une Morale pas comme les autres: Introduction à l'Ethique de Bonhoeffer", Etudes théologiques et religieuses, Montpellier, 1965, 3, pp. 192-208; 1965, 4, pp. 255-276. Quote by A. Dumas: op. cit., p. 160.

35) Ethics, p. 66.

III. REALITY OF CHRIST

Bonhoeffer's Ethics is firmly grounded in Christology and orientated to man's concrete situation in the present world. Christ and reality go together in both. In other words his Christology is always worldly, and his respect and concern for the world is always informed by the transcending dimension of his faith in Christ. He declares that there is only one ultimate reality, and that is the reality in Jesus Christ. In the person of Christ the reality of God and the reality of the world are united and work together in a polemical unity, so that in him there is no possibility of partaking in one without the other. Since both divine and cosmic reality are in Christ, we should not think in terms of two static spheres, such as sacred and secular, revelational and rational, but link them in the unity of Christ. The whole reality of the world is already drawn into Christ and bound together in Him, and the movement of history is accepted and becoming accepted by God in Christ.

Whoever professes to believe in the reality of Jesus Christ, as the revelation of God, must in the same breath profess his faith in both the reality of God and the reality of the world; for in Christ he finds God and the world reconciled. And for just this reason the Christian is no longer the man of eternal conflict, but, just as the reality in Christ is one, so he, too, since he shares in this reality in Christ, is himself

an undivided whole. His worldliness does not divide him from Christ, and his Christianity does not divide him from the world. Belonging wholly to Christ, he stands at the same time wholly in the world. (36)

He does not say Christ is identical with reality. He recognizes and holds in esteem the transcendental character of Christ, however, he simply cannot speak about the transcending Christ without talking about the world at the same time.

There are, therefore, not two spheres, but only the one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united... There are not two spheres, standing side by side, competing with each other and attacking each other's frontiers. If that were so, this frontier dispute would always be the decisive problem of history. But the whole reality of the world is already drawn in into Christ and bound together in Him, and the movement of history consists solely in divergence and convergence in relation to this centre. (37)

The world is never abandoned but has been given its inner nature in Christ. History is not God versus the world, certainly not Church and the world. The concrete reality of this secular world is not destroyed by being outside the total reality of Christ, but completed and accepted within it.

As mentioned before, the reality in general and reality in Christ are not the same. The contrast between them are indicated skilfully in his discussion about

36) Ethics, p. 173.

37) op. cit., p. 170.

Jesus and the Pharisees. Bonhoeffer understands the Pharisee as an extremely admirable man, for he subordinates his entire life to his knowledge of good and evil and is as severe a judge of himself as of his neighbour to the honour of God. The Pharisee is the man who even humbly gives thanks for this knowledge. Then for the Pharisee the problem, to which he devotes the entire momentum of his life, is this conflict and the decision necessary to overcome it. This explains the continuous and unresolvable argument between him and Jesus. The Pharisee is preoccupied with an issue Jesus has left behind, and Jesus is speaking in terms of a reality he either cannot or will not recognize.

Just as the Pharisees' question and temptation arises from the disunion of the knowledge of good and evil, so, too, Jesus's answer arises from unity with God, with the origin, and from the overcoming of the disunion of man with God. The Pharisees and Jesus are speaking on totally different levels.
(38)

The confrontation is radical. The conflict remains, but it has itself been transmuted. It is now the conflict between differing realities, the one for which God and man are reunited, the other for which God and man are still separated. For the latter the problem is for man to reach God by way of the integrity and constancy of his own decisions, for the former the challenge is for man to decide in the light of the

fact that God has reached him. It is this new reality that Jesus embodies and seeks to express. This is why he refuses to be trapped inside the problem of the wrong reality.³⁹ Jesus seemed not to answer the question of the Pharisees. Bonhoeffer claims that this is the root of one of the most basic, pronounced, and unavoidable elements of the Gospel.

Already in the New Testament there is no single question put by men to Jesus which Jesus answers with an acceptance of the human either-or that every such question implies. (40)

It is the claim of the Christian faith that Christ reunites man with God. To talk about the confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees embodies this claim. The new reality is not out there somewhere; it is in the midst of the human struggle with the ethical question. To speak about the overcoming of the disunion of man with God will be a meaningless, pious abstraction unless one sees that this entails abrasive conflict with those obsessed with the question of good and evil. When one does see this abrasive confrontation, then the phrase becomes a pointer, an attempt to indicate the astonishing possibility that looms up beyond the good-and-evil barrier. It is right that B.A. Reist insists that Bonhoeffer made clear both the need and the room for the dis-

39) B. A. Reist: The Promise of Bonhoeffer, p. 65.

40) Ethics, p. 14.

cussion of the world by stating the uniqueness and significance of Jesus Christ.⁴¹

Now we must think about "Reality in Christ." Jesus as Christ cannot be discussed apart from the consequences of his coming, so the world as it really is cannot be discussed apart from Christ. God and the world are not torn asunder but must be viewed together. Bonhoeffer recommends man to see the truth with simplicity which is combined with wisdom.

It is precisely because he looks only to God, without any sidelong glance at the world, that he is able to look at the reality of the world freely and without prejudice. And that is how simplicity becomes wisdom. The wise man is the one who sees reality as it is, and who sees into the depths of things. That is why only that man is wise who sees reality in God. (42)

For Bonhoeffer, who is committed to the conspiracy against Hitler's demonic power, the depths of things is not a mere metaphor nor the formulation. The reality has to do with the essential nature of things.

To understand reality is not the same as to know about outward events. It is to perceive the essential nature of things. The best informed man is not necessarily the wisest. Indeed there is a danger that precisely in the multiplicity of his knowledge he will lose sight of what is essential. But on the other hand knowledge of an apparently trivial detail quite often makes it possible to see into the depths of things. And

41) cf. B. A. Reist: The Promise of Bonhoeffer, p. 65.

42) Ethics, p. 50.

so the wise man will seek to acquire the best possible knowledge about events, but always without becoming dependent upon this knowledge. To recognize the significant in the factual is wisdom. (43)

The wisdom that is to discern the significant in the midst of the factual is a Christological question for him. The factual must be given its due, but without the Christ it will fall short of the ultimate reality, the reality of God. The ultimate importance of the Christian ethic, according to Bonhoeffer, is no longer that one should become good, or that the condition of the world should be made better by one's action, but that the reality of God discloses itself everywhere to be the ultimate reality. The reality of God can be shown by man, and participation in this ultimate reality is the gift of God in Christ to man.

In Christ we are offered the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and in the reality of the world, but not in the one without the other. ... Christian ethics enquires about the realization in our world of this divine and cosmic reality which is given in Christ. (44)

In this connection the section entitled "Christ, Reality and Good (Christ, the Church and the World)" contains very important materials. Bonhoeffer begins with the definition of Christian ethics. The ethical

43) Ethics, p. 50.

44) op. cit., pp. 167-168.

question is no longer "How can one be good?" or "How can one do good?", but it is rather "What is the will of God?"⁴⁵ It means that the ethical question presupposes a decision with regard to ultimate reality that is a decision of faith.

But the problem of ethics at once assumes a new aspect if it becomes apparent that these realities, myself and the world, themselves lie embedded in a quite different ultimate reality, namely, the reality of God, the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer. What is of ultimate importance is now no longer that I should become good, or that the condition of the world should be made better by my action, but that the reality of God should show itself everywhere to be the ultimate reality. (46)

The reality of the world which we encounter is always already sustained, accepted and reconciled in the reality of God. This is the secret of the revelation of God in the man Jesus Christ. Therefore what is offered to man in Christ is the ultimate reality in which he has a part to play. What does this mean?

Bonhoeffer emphasized that wisdom has to do with the recognition of the significant in the factual. It is the Christ who is in the midst of the factual that is the clue to this significance. This, however, makes sense only if the factual itself is taken with the

45) See Ethics, p. 161.

46) op. cit., p. 161.

utmost seriousness. He was willing to make common cause with the positivists and empiricists whose sole concern is with things as they are in one very basic sense. It is reality that teaches what is good. Bonhoeffer recognizes that their conception is always "closer to reality"⁴⁷ than is any idealistic attempt to realize the unreal. However, in saying this, he was careful to state the limits of the factual by itself.

It now transpires that the concept of reality which underlies the positivistic ethic is the meretricious concept of the empirically verifiable, which implies denial of the origin of this reality in the ultimate reality, in God. (48)

The Christian ethic speaks in a quite different sense of the reality which is the origin of good. The Christian ethic speaks of the reality of God as the ultimate reality without and within everything that is, and of the reality of the world as it is, which possesses reality solely through the reality of God. The place where the answer is given, both to the question concerning the reality of God and the reality of the world, is designated solely and alone by the name of Jesus Christ. No one can speak either of God or of the world without speaking of Christ. The conflict between what is (Seiende) and what should be (Gesolte) is overcome and

47) Ethics, p. 166.

48) op. cit., p. 166.

reconciled in Christ, in the ultimate reality.

Christian ethics enquires about the realization in our world of this divine and cosmic reality which is given in Christ. This does not mean that 'our world' is something outside the divine and cosmic reality which is in Christ, or that it is not already part of the world which is sustained, accepted and reconciled in Him. It does not mean that one must still begin by applying some kind of 'principle' to our situation and our time. The enquiry is directed rather towards the way in which the reality in Christ, which for a long time already has comprised us and our world within itself, is taking effect as something now present, and towards the way in which life may be conducted in this reality. Its purpose is, therefore, participation in the reality of God and of the world in Jesus Christ today, and this participation must be such that I never experience the reality of God without the reality of the world or the reality of the world without the reality of God. (49)

Therefore the reality in Christ has to do with what is in the midst of what exists. The reality must be visible. Then where and how is this reality to be seen in fact? Bonhoeffer answers this question by making his Christology coincide with his understanding of the Church.

As we have already seen,⁵⁰ he develops this thought in the chapter entitled as "Ethics as Formation". He states that man becomes a real man because God became a real man, but it does not mean man becomes God. God only changes his form into the form of man, so that man may become man in the eyes of God. Man is recreated before God in Christ. Man's new form is Christ's form

49) Ethics, pp. 167-168.

50) See Chapter III, section 1.

itself. Here attention must be paid to this phrase.

It is a mystery, for which there is no explanation, that only a part of mankind recognize the form of their Redeemer. The longing of the Incarnate to take form in all men is as yet still unsatisfied. He bore the form of man as a whole, and yet He can take form only in a small band. These are His Church. (51)

Bonhoeffer combines his idea of formation with his concept of reality using the Pauline concept of the Body of Christ.

The New Testament states the case profoundly and clearly when it calls the Church the Body of Christ. The body is the form. (52)

For him the Church is Christ Himself who has taken form among men. However, since in Christ's Body man (der Mensch) and also all mankind are taken up by Christ, the Church may be called the Body of Christ.

The Church, then, bears the form which is in truth the proper form of all humanity. The image in which she is formed is the image of man... The Church is nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has really taken form.... The Church is the man in Christ, incarnate, sentenced and awakened to new life. (53)

For Bonhoeffer the Church must not be religious, but ethical. He states his conviction forcefully as follows:

In the first instance, therefore, she (Church) has essentially nothing whatever to do with the so-called religious functions of man, but with the whole man in his existence in the world with

51) Ethics, p. 63.

52) op. cit., pp. 63-64.

53) op. cit., p. 64.

all its implications. What matters in the Church is not religion but the form of Christ, and its taking form amidst a band of men. (54)

The Church is not a religious community of worshippers of Christ. Christian ethics starts from the formation of the Church in conformity with the form of Christ. Therefore Christian ethics must be concrete not abstract. He advocates a movement towards a concrete ethic. Because the important thing is not what is good once and for all, but the way in which Christ takes form among us here and now.

The Church's responsibility is not to project sets of ethical ideals but proclaim the reality of God's love. The representative work of the Church, therefore, is not any self-righteously high-principled action, nor is it free from the poison of sin; it is relatively sinless responsible action participating in the work of Christ. For the Church to refuse to participate in Christ's substitutionary work by responsible action would be to refuse to be the Church.

The incarnation of Christ which brings judgement and reconciliation illustrates what Bonhoeffer means by true secularity.

Just as in Christ the reality of God entered into the reality of the world, so, too, is that which is Christian to be found only in that which is of the world, the 'Supernatural' only in the

54) Ethics, p. 64.

natural, the holy only in the profane, and the revelational only in the rational. (55)

The real concept of the secular is, for Bonhoeffer, that it shall always be seen in the movement of being accepted and becoming accepted by God in Christ. Though God and the world are reconciled in the incarnation of Christ, there is still no identity between the two.

"The reason for this is that reality is first and last not lifeless; but it is the real man, the incarnate God."⁵⁶

This reality, that is the incarnation of the Word of God, determines the behaviour of the Church in the world. The Church in bearing witness to its reality in Christ finds itself to be foreign to the world. But this foreignness is the mission of the Church in the world.

The Church is divided from the world solely by the fact that she affirms in faith the reality of God's acceptance of man, a reality which is the property of the whole world. By allowing this reality to take effect within herself, she testifies that it is effectual for the whole world. (57)

The resurrection of Christ overcomes our sin and death and through this event creation has its new beginning. Jesus Christ is the living Lord to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth.

All the powers of the world are made subject to Him and must serve Him, each in its own way. The lordship of Jesus Christ is not the rule of

55) Ethics, p. 171.

56) op. cit., p. 198.

57) op. cit., p. 178.

a foreign power; it is the lordship of the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer, the lordship of Him through whom and for whom all created beings exist, of Him in whom indeed all created beings alone find their origin, their goal and their essence. (58)

Everything is in Him, through Him and for Him.

This is no mere Christianisation of the secular, but the placing of the secular under the Lordship of Christ.

Therefore Christian ethics begins and ends in the Person of Christ. It is grounded in the Word of God and the Work of Christ and finds its fulfilment in man's participation in the substitutionary work of Christ through the deputyship of being for the other.⁵⁹

The point of departure for Christian ethics is not the reality of one's own self, or the reality of the world; nor is it the reality of standards and values. It is the reality of God as He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ. It is fair to begin by demanding assent to this proposition of anyone who wishes to concern himself with the problem of a Christian ethic. It poses the ultimate and crucial question of the reality which we mean to reckon with in our lives, whether it is to be the reality of the revelational word of God or earthly imperfections, whether it is to be resurrection or death. (60)

58) Ethics, p. 264.

59) P. F. Kohler: "The Christocentric Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer", Scottish Journal of Theology, 1970, vol. 23, no. 1, p. 39.

60) Ethics, pp. 162-163.

IV. TWO SPHERES

Bonhoeffer's christocentric standpoint is most clearly shown in his discussion on "Thinking in Terms of Two Spheres." His rejection of two spheres thinking comes from his christological concept of reality.

"Bonhoeffer is clearly convinced that the incarnation has restored the whole of reality under one Head and that in Christ faith has a vision of the whole creation as it existed before God in the beginning and as it will be at the end."⁶¹ Therefore for Bonhoeffer the rejection of two spheres is not a revision of the classical Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms but a rejection of the traditional thinking of Christian ethics. It is one of his definite contentions in the Ethics. He begins with this definition.

Since the beginnings of Christian ethics after the times of the New Testament the main underlying conception in ethical thought, and the one which consciously or unconsciously has determined its whole course, has been the conception of a juxtaposition and conflict of two spheres, the one divine, holy, supernatural and Christian, and the other worldly, pfofane, natural and un-Christian. (62)

He disagrees with such a thought in his conviction that God became man, He accepted man in Christ and

61) J. Moltmann: "The Lordship of Christ and Human Society" in Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer, p. 61.

62) Ethics, p.168.

thereby He reconciled the world of man with God. He insists that the origin of action which accords with reality is the incarnate God, Jesus who has accepted, loved, condemned and reconciled man and the world. This christological vision of the reconciliation of God and the world denies all dualistic systems. According to the thinking of conflict of two spheres, "reality as a whole now falls into two parts, and the concern of ethics is with the proper relation of these two parts to each other."⁶³

However this effort is in vain, because it turns on the false assumption "that there are realities which lie outside the reality that is in Christ."⁶⁴ He explains and criticizes the misunderstanding in history.

In the scholastic scheme of things the realm of the natural is made subordinate to the realm of grace; in the pseudo-Lutheran scheme the autonomy of the orders of this world is proclaimed in opposition to the law of Christ; and in the scheme of the Enthusiasts the congregation of the Elect takes up the struggle with a hostile world for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. In all these schemes the cause of Christ becomes a partial and provincial matter within the limits of reality. (65)

In all these instances realities are dealt with without reference to the reconciliation of God and the world in Christ. In every case the unity and wholeness of reality thus restored are neglected and not achieved.

63) Ethics, p. 168.

64) op. cit., P. 169.

65) op. cit., pp. 168-169.

Christian ethics, for Bonhoeffer, starts from the one reality or the whole reality. This unity is not a unity as a matter of principle as in the idealistic systems, but of the reconciliation of God and the world in the person of Christ.

It consists in Him as the one who acts in the responsibility of deputyship, as the God who for love of man has become man. (66)

Here the thought that "reality is first and last the real man, the incarnate Jesus Christ" must be remembered. Christ is the man who bears the reality in Himself. Bonhoeffer's thinking is based on such an understanding of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ does not confront reality as one who is alien to it, but it is He who alone has borne and experienced the essence of the real in His own body, who has spoken from the standpoint of reality as no man on earth can do, who alone has fallen victim to no ideology, but who is the truly real one, who has borne within Himself and fulfilled the essence of history, and in whom the law of the life of history is embodied. He is the real one, the origin, essence and goal of all that is real, and for that reason He is Himself the Lord and the Law of the real. Consequently the word of Jesus Christ is the interpretation of His existence, and it is therefore the interpretation of that reality in which history attains to its fulfilment. The words of Jesus are the divine commandment for responsible action in history in so far as this history is the reality of history as it is fulfilled in Christ, the responsibility for man as it is fulfilled in Christ alone. (67)

66) Ethics, pp. 201-202.

67) op. cit., pp. 199-200.

Consequently he can state plainly that Christian ethics enquires about the realization in our world of this divine and cosmic reality which is given in Christ. In other words our problem is participation in the reality of God and of the world in Jesus Christ today.

With this conviction he insists that the thought of two spheres results only in the illusion of the wrong dilemma.

So long as Christ and the world are conceived as two opposing and mutually repellent spheres, man will be left in the following dilemma: he abandons reality as a whole, and places himself in one or other of the two spheres. He seeks Christ without the world, or he seeks the world without Christ. (68)

In either case he must deceive himself, and if he tries to stand in both spaces at once he inevitably falls into an endless conflict.

The heart of the fallacy of two-spheres thinking is to regard such pairs as an ultimate static antagonism. The two spheres of thought set up such static antitheses as secular and Christian, natural and supernatural, profane and sacred, rational and revelational. But Bonhoeffer points out that these opposites have already united originally in the reality of Christ. They do not exist "in themselves" and "on their own account",⁶⁹ but

68) Ethics, p. 169.

69) op. cit., p. 170.

they have their reality nowhere save in Christ. He speaks of the real concept of the secular. It will always be seen in the movement of being accepted and becoming accepted by God in Christ. His original word "weltlich" means "worldly" rather than "secular". It is different from so-called secularism which is often used as a negative connotation, and it has to do with the fact that that which is Christian can be found only in the world. It was Bonhoeffer's conviction that as Jesus, who is the reality of God, entered into the reality of the world in the form of the Christ, so, too, is that which is Christian to be found only in that which is of the world. And if so the tension between Christ, and therefore the Christian, on the one hand, and the world, on the other, must be discerned in the midst of the world itself. It is the tension between the reality of Christ and the reality of the world apart from Christ.

As already mentioned, however, Bonhoeffer does not identify the Christian with the world, the natural with the supernatural and the revelational with the rational. The discussion of this relation is one of his most important contributions to the theological work of the present day.

Luther was protesting against a Christianity which was striving for independence and detaching itself from the reality in Christ. He protested with the help of the secular and in the name of a better Christianity. So, too, today, when

Christianity is employed as a polemical weapon against the secular, this must be done in the name of a better secularity (Weltlichkeit) and above all it must not lead back to a static predominance of the spiritual sphere as an end in itself. It is only in this sense, as a polemical unity, that Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms is to be accepted, and it was no doubt in this sense that it was originally intended. (70)

The problem of the "better worldliness"--perhaps a better translation than "better secularity"--is that it supplants the question of how two spheres are to be related. It means that there is no real possibility of being a Christian (Christsein) outside the reality of the world and that there is no real worldly (Weltlichkeit) existence outside the reality of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer's concern is always the living reality. The faith in the revelation of the ultimate reality in Jesus Christ invalidates two sphere thinking.

Then he picks up the problem of Church and the world. He recognizes that the New Testament contains statements about the Church as a space. The Church should not be reduced to the status of a purely spiritual force, for it is essential to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ that the Church occupies space within the world. If this is not so it cannot be real. Then how to understand this space without relapsing into two-sphere thought is a problem, and a complicated one.

The space of the Church is not there in order to try to deprive the world of a piece of its territory, but precisely in order to prove to the world that it is still the world, the world which is loved by God and reconciled with Him.
(71)

However, on the other hand, the New Testament declares that this world belongs to the Body of Christ.

It is implicit in the New Testament statement concerning the incarnation of God in Christ that all men are taken up, enclosed and borne within the Body of Christ and that this is just what the congregation of the faithful are to make known to the world by their words and by their lives.
(72)

God and the world became one in Christ. Nevertheless the difference must not be overlooked.

Although the Church and the world are different from each other, yet there cannot be a static, spatial borderline between them. The question now is how one is to conceive this distinction between Church and world without relapsing into these spatial terms. (73)

The community of the faithful must be, and it must have space, or the faith is denied. But there cannot be a spatial borderline between it and the world, unless one is thinking about two spheres.

He rejects any notion of a static borderline between Church and the world. He tries to solve this complicated relation by using the term dynamic frontier.

71) Ethics, p. 174.

72) op. cit., p. 178.

73) op. cit., p. 178.

She (the Church) asks for no more space than she needs for the purpose of serving the world by bearing witness to Jesus Christ and to the reconciliation of the world with God through Him. (74)

If one wishes to speak, then, of the space or sphere of the Church, one must bear in mind that the confines of this space are at every moment being overrun and broken down by the testimony of the Church to Jesus Christ. And this means that all mistaken thinking in terms of spheres must be excluded, since it is deleterious to the proper understanding of the Church. (75)

It is with the dynamics of this frontier, not with mere metaphors, that Bonhoeffer intends to replace the two spheres thinking.

In this connection an examination of his thinking about State and Church which he dealt with in Part Two of the Ethics is helpful to make clearer his understanding of this problem.

His basic attitudes may be expressed by saying that Church and State are two forms of the kingdom in a kind of dialectical relationship with each other. Each has its own distinctive task given to it by God. Neither is subject to the other nor master of the other, but both are called to serve obediently the God who is the lord of both Church and State, as the two forms of the kingdom of God, mutually witnessing to each other and limiting

74) Ethics, p. 174.

75) op. cit., p. 175.

each other in the life of the world. The Church has two basic tasks in the world: To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to remind the state of its responsibility to preserve order in the world. When the state oversteps its proper bounds, the Church must call it once again to a recognition of its limits. He maintains this conception in his earlier writings.

However, when the Nazi regime was consolidating its control over German life and thought, during the middle thirties, he did not mention the state as a form of the kingdom of God in the world. The reason or background for this change is easily understood. Some of the so-called German Christians were eager to reconcile the Christian faith with the Nazi programme at that time. Naturally they were stressing the divinely given authority of the state and its independence from the Church. Bonhoeffer disagreed with such theological justification of Naziism. Naziism with its demonic power has already run away beyond the legitimate limitation. So the attempt to speak a political word to the State had already proved vain.

In the Ethics he reiterates the rejection of both other worldliness and this-worldly kingdom building. He also insists they must neither be mixed together nor torn apart. He begins as follows:

In using the term 'church', and especially in clarifying its relation to the terms 'government' and 'state', we have to distinguish between the spiritual office or ministry and the congregation or the Christians. The spiritual office is the divinely ordained authority to exercise spiritual dominion by divine right. It does not proceed from the congregation, but from God. A clear distinction must be drawn between the secular and the spiritual authority, but the Christians are, nevertheless, at the same time citizens, and the citizens, whether they be believers or not, are at the same time subject to the claim of Jesus Christ. Consequently the relationship of the spiritual office to the government differs from that of the Christians. In order to avoid constant misunderstandings this difference should be kept clearly in view. (76)

In the section "The Basis of Government", two sources are considered. One is in the nature of man which was advocated by Aristotle, the other is in the notion of sin which was put forward by the Reformers. The former insists the state is the supreme consummation of the rational character of men, and to serve it is the supreme purpose of human life. The latter places the origin of the state as government in the Fall. The government is considered as the power to protect man against the chaos which is caused by sin, by using the sword which is given by God.

Bonhoeffer, however, does not take these theories. He thinks the basis of government is in Christ. There is no other basis than Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ that all things are created

76) Ethics. pp. 297-298.

(John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2), and in particular "thrones, dominions, principalities and powers" (Col. 1:16). It is only in Jesus Christ that all things "consist" (Col. 1:17). And it is He who is "the head of the Church" (Col. 1:1). It is thoroughly christo-centric. Explanations on the relation between Jesus Christ and government, under seven headings, are given in the Ethics.⁷⁷ The derivations from nature and the sin of man are consequent on the derivations in terms of natural law. The only way to supersede them is the derivation of government from Jesus Christ.

He recognizes the divine character of government in its being, in its task and in its claim. Government is given to us as a reality and as something which 'is' (αὶ δε οὖσα Rom. 13:1). It has its existence in Jesus Christ, and through the cross of Christ it is reconciled with God. Therefore it is linked with a divine commission. The task of government consists in serving the dominion of Christ on earth by punishing the wicked and praising the good or "them that do well" (I Pet. 2:14). For this task the government is required to observe the second table of the Ten Commandments. As far as its claim is concerned, Bonhoeffer understands that the claim of government,

77) See Ethics, pp. 301-303.

which is based on its power and its mission, is the claim of God and is binding upon conscience. The duty of obedience is binding on the Christian until a government directly compels him to offend against the divine commandment, that is to say, until a government openly denies its divine commission and thereby forfeits its claim. So when a government violates or exceeds its commission at any point, the Christian's obedience is to be refused for conscience's sake, for the Lord's sake.

He understands positively that government has the divine task of preserving the world, with its institutions which are given by God, for the purpose of Christ.⁷⁸ Here his characteristic notion of the divine mandates should be remembered. Government is not a creator but a maintainer of God's creation. For example, marriage and labour have their origin in God, and government must acknowledge and preserve them.

The connection between Church and government is defined in this way. Government is instituted to serve Christ. Christ is the Lord of government and at the same time the Lord of the Church. Government serves Christ, also indirectly the Church, in the exercise of its commission to secure an outward justice by the power of the sword. Through this service towards Christ,

78) See Ethics, p. 308.

government is ultimately linked with the Church.

Government does not stand as a second authority side by side with the authority of Christ, but its own authority is only a form of the authority of Christ. As a citizen the Christian does not cease to be a Christian, but he serves Christ and obeys Christ. On the other hand, the Church has the task of summoning the whole world to submit to the dominion of Jesus Christ. Since she knows that it is in obedience to Jesus Christ that the commission of government is properly executed, she testifies to government as to their common Master.

Then the problem has to be considered, whether government makes a religious decision, or whether its task lies in religious neutrality. The office of government must remain independent of the religious decision, but it pertains to the responsibility of it to support the practice of religion.

Government will fulfil its obligation under the first commandment by being government in the rightful manner and by discharging its governmental responsibility also with respect to the Church. But it does not possess the office of confessing and preaching faith in Jesus Christ.
(79)

The Church has political responsibility. He distinguishes between the responsibility of the

79) Ethics, p. 313.

spiritual office and the responsibility of each Christian. The Church has an office of guardianship to name sin as sin and warn people against sin. As far as a political responsibility of the individual Christian is concerned, the author insists that because of his faith and his charity he is responsible for his own calling and for the sphere of his own personal life. Every individual must fulfill his office and mission in the polis and through it, in the true sense, he serves government with his responsibility.

The problem of State and Church was, needless to say, a very urgent one for himself. He pursued the conspiracy against Naziism, and lived in the midst of this question. Some people criticize Bonhoeffer on the grounds that he overleapt the Christian limitation by engaging in a political resistance movement. However, it was his conviction that the individual Christian cannot be made responsible for the action of government, and he must not make himself responsible for it, but that by responding to his own calling and fulfilling his responsibility in faith he can have an effect in the whole of the community.

Thus he concludes the discussion.

Government and Church are connected in such various ways that their relationship cannot be regulated in accordance with any single general principle. ... No constitutional form can as such exactly represent the actual relative closeness and

remoteness of government and Church. Government and Church are bound by the same Lord and are bound together. In their task government and Church are separate, but government and Church have the same field of action, man. No single one of these relationships must be isolated so as to provide the basis for a particular constitutional form (for example in the sequence state church, free church, national church); the true aim is to provide room within every given form for the relationship which is, in fact, instituted by God and to entrust the further development to the Lord of both government and Church. (80)

V. MANDATES

The concepts of mandates is one of the unique and important thoughts in the Ethics. As is well known Bonhoeffer deals with the idea of the mandates twice. In chapter five "Christ, Reality and Good", he begins with the christological unity of reality. In chapter seven "The 'ethical' and the 'Christian' as a Theme", he starts with an inquiry into the factors that make ethical language possible and the translation of the law into concrete action.

It is correct to understand this conception in the line of his searching for a better worldliness. Bonhoeffer sought to permeate the whole understanding of the structure of life in the world with the same dynamic that

80) Ethics, p. 315.

informed his refusal to think in terms of two spheres. Thus he developed the concept of mandates.

The world is created through Christ and unto Christ whether it knows it or not. The world's relation to Christ takes concrete form in a number of divine mandates in which certain basic relationships and spheres of life are shaped and defined.

The world is relative to Christ, no matter whether it knows it or not. This relativeness of the world to Christ assumes concrete form in certain mandates of God in the world. The Scriptures name four such mandates: labour, marriage, government and the Church. We speak of divine mandates rather than of divine orders because the word mandate refers more clearly to a divinely imposed task rather than to a determination of being. (81)

In the section entitled "The Concept of the Mandate", Bonhoeffer examines the traditional concepts such as "institution", "estate", and "office". He, however, decides to drop these words because of the historical misconceptions associated with them. He frankly says, "for lack of a better word, therefore, we will for the time being retain the term 'mandate', but it is still

81) Ethics, p. 179. In the Ethics, p. 252, he substitutes 'culture' for 'labour'. In Letters and Papers from Prison (pp. 193ff.), he reflects of how the 'area of freedom (art, education, friendship, play)' is to be brought within the system of the four mandates. He attempts to bring this sphere of reality not under the mandate of 'labour', but under the mandate of 'Church', or alternatively to establish the concept of a fifth mandate. However, Bonhoeffer never speaks of five mandates, but invariably of only four.

our purpose, by dint of clarifying the concept itself, to help to renew and restore the old notion of the institution, the estate and the office."⁸² Here he is on very traditional ground, and his move beyond the limits of his heritage is subtle. However it must be noticed that by the choice of the term "mandate" instead of "order" he means to indicate their character as divine institutions rather than self-determined entities.

By the term 'mandate' we understand the concrete divine commission which has its foundation in the revelation of Christ and which is evidenced by Scripture; it is the legitimation and warrant for the execution of a definite divine commandment, the conferment of divine authority on an earthly agent. The term 'mandate' must also be taken to imply the claiming, the seizure and the formation of a definite earthly domain by the divine commandment. The bearer of the mandate acts as a deputy in the place of Him who assigns him his commission. (83)

Therefore the mandates are not norms, but rather spheres of responsibility. In them the formation of Christ is to take place in the sphere of everyday. The mandates are not simply something like ordinances for life, built into creation as such. They have a genuine relation to the event of salvation. In them the way is to be prepared for men to come to Christ, and for Christ to come to men. The mandates, thus, are aspects of the

82) Ethics, p. 254.

83) op. cit., p. 254.

mission of Christians to the world and for this reason viewpoints for a concrete ethic from the perspective of the Church of Jesus Christ in this world.⁸⁴ The basic character of the doctrine of the mandates is Christocentric.

It is God's will that there shall be labour, marriage, government and church in the world; and it is His will that all these, each in its own way, shall be through Christ, directed towards Christ, and in Christ. (85)

When Bonhoeffer wrote these sentences, the time of the Third Reich, there was the controversy over the ideological glorification of race and nationality. In that controversy the principle of national law was invoked to justify and support the claims of the so-called German Christian. National law, for them, was the most important of all the institutions of creation. Against this perversion of the doctrine of the institutions, he uses the concept of the mandates and presses towards the God who lives and commands and who is revealed solely in the dominion of Christ. He insists that the divine mandates are introduced into the world from above as orders of Christ's reality, that is to say, of the reality of the love of God for the world and men which is revealed in Jesus Christ.

It is also clear that with this doctrine of mandates

84) H. Ott: Reality and Faith, the Theological Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 282.

85) Ethics, p. 179.

he seeks to reformulate the Lutheran doctrine of the three estates, oeconomicus, politicus, and hierarchicus.

The three 'primary institutions' of social life in Christendom, viz., marriage, the state and the church, or alternatively family and economics, state and church, are founded by God. Even man can see how God has so ordered them that they correspond to nature. For they were created together with man. ... They provide the sphere where man may serve God in the world. They are what Luther called 'the three primary powers to help us in resisting the devil.' ... The three institutions to which we have reference are the Church, the state, and the economy. Two of them, it will be noted, are secular powers, viz., the state and the economy. The 'secular state' in the hierarchical structure of the corpus christianum (in Catholic doctrine) is not left to itself on principle or made subject to the 'clerical estate' as a mere object of education. On the contrary, their whole life is directly subject to the word of God. (86)

Bonhoeffer endeavours to refurbish such a teaching. The doctrine of the mandates works better than any theology of orders.

The mandates are dependent solely on the commandment of God, and these four mandates are in conjunction, in combination, and in opposition with one another. Each mandate is bounded on two sides: by the eschatological reign of Christ, so far as its existence and function is concerned, and by the other mandates in regard to its limits. No single one of them is sufficient in itself or can claim to replace all the others.

86) E. Wolf: Peregrinatio, 1954, pp. 232ff. Quoted by J. Moltmann: Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer, p. 74.

Each mandate is, as it were, answerable to God alone.⁸⁷

It is the character of the mandates that all men are subject to all four of the mandates.

He(God) has not merely imposed one of these mandates on each individual, but He has imposed all four on all men. This means that there can be no retreating from a 'secular' into a 'spiritual' sphere. There can be only the practice, the learning, of the Christian life under these four mandates of God. (88)

Each individual obeys God in each of the mandates.

Through this the mandates serve "to confront man with the one and entire reality which is manifested to us in Jesus Christ. Thus here again all the lines converge in the reality of the body of Jesus Christ, in which God and man became one."⁸⁹

It is the task of the mandates that is the clue to their being, not the reverse, and these tasks are meaningful only as the commands of God.

Then who are the bearers of the mandates? As the commandment comes down from above, the bearers of the mandates receive their commission from God. Therefore they become the bearers as deputies of God and representatives of God. This vertical relationship plays a major role in Bonhoeffer's thinking, not least in

87) See K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, III/4, pp. 29f.

88) Ethics, p. 179.

89) op. cit., p. 183.

the doctrine of the mandates and of the authorization of the bearers of the mandates. They are antitypes of the dominion of Christ on earth. This relation is explained concretely as follows.

The father acts for the children, working for them, caring for them, interceding, fighting and suffering for them. Thus in a real sense he is their deputy. He is not an isolated individual, but he combines in himself the selves of a number of human beings. (90)

This opens up new applications for those christological structures of deputyship derived from sanctorum communio, namely, social relationship and being for others. The concrete acceptance of deputyship and responsibility for the neighbour is obedience under the divine mandates. That creates those irreversible inter-human relationships within the mandates: Christ and humanity, church and world, father and child, government and citizens, man and things. The life of obedience within the mandates means being for others in discipleship to Christ. The imperative structure of the mandates thus rests upon the indicative structure of deputyship, whether the latter is already present or still to be achieved.

The task and basis of the mandates in relation to Christ are specifically as follows.

90) Ethics, p. 194.

Labour. For Bonhoeffer the mandate of labour includes property, culture, and society. It has a supra-lapsarian basis in the biblical command 'to dress it and keep it' (Gen. 2:15). Even after the fall it still has the mission of participating creatively in "the glorification and service of Jesus Christ."⁹¹ Labour deals with man's integration into the creative dominion of God, a creation of things, values, and relationships based on the world God has created. Of course this is not a creation out of nothing, like God's creation, but man can join a making of new things on the basis of God's creation. No man can evade this mandate.

Through the divine mandate of labour there is to come into being a world which, knowingly or not, is waiting for Christ, is designed for Christ, is open to Christ, serves Him and glorifies Him. (92)

However the fact that the bearer of this mandate is the race of Cain casts the dark shadow over all human labour. Yet for the believer there is an analogy, a reminder and foretaste of the original and eschatological final being in the world before God. Thus labour has a mission in the realm of the penultimate, preparing the way for the ultimate, the entrance of Christ.

91) Ethics, p. 180

92) op. cit., p. 181.

Marriage. The mandate of marriage includes both marriage and family and has the same supra-lapsarian basis. In marriage, man is integrated into the creative dominion of God through the procreation and education of children. "Man enters into the will of the Creator in sharing in the process of creation."⁹³ The believer discerns an analogy with the "marriage between Christ and his Church".⁹⁴ Marriage and family life provide an eminent example of life in deputyship.

Government. The mandate of government presupposes the divine mandates of labour and marriage. Government itself cannot produce either life or values. The government finds its mandates already in the world for whose order, protection, and rule it is responsible, and is itself dependent upon them. Government serves to protect labour in society and culture, and to protect marriage and family. Bonhoeffer prefers to speak of government rather than of the state, because it expresses more clearly its commission from above. Government is designed to watch over life and protect it, and is thus designed for deputyship.

The relatively best form of government in his opinion

93) Ethics, p. 181.

94) cf. K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, III/4, p. 49.

is properly understood divine right of government. According to his understanding Hitler and the power of Naziism was the negative example of a leader who came to power from below not from above. Any attempt to justify government from natural law or preservation must be rejected, because government or authority in the world is grounded in Christ. Government is not a creator, therefore it must never take the initiative in affairs of labour, science, culture, or marriage. It is the task of government to maintain created things in their proper order.

By the establishment of law and by the force of the sword the governing authority preserves the world for the reality of Jesus Christ. (95)

It must be noted again that government is independent from the religious decision. Where it regards itself as limited by the other mandates, government respects them and fulfills its own task faithfully. The Christian is obedient to Christ in his obedience to government. Likewise the government fulfills its task in the sphere of the penultimate in the service to Christ.

Church. The mandate of the Church is to proclaim the revelation of God in Christ who is incarnate, crucified

95) Ethics, p. 182.

and exalted. This mandate "is concerned, therefore, with the eternal salvation of the whole world."⁹⁶

This mandate is the task of enabling the reality of Jesus Christ to become real and so it extends to all mankind and within all the other mandates. The Church proclaims reality as it is in Christ to the world.

The cross of atonement is the setting free for life before God in the midst of the godless world; it is the setting free for life in genuine worldliness. (97)

The reign of Christ thus proclaimed by the Church does not mean the lordship of the Church over the natural, worldly institutions. Since the Church is also one mandate among others, Bonhoeffer differentiates the Church's universal proclamation of the Gospel from the law of the Church as a social community, and as a public body with a life of its own, distinct from secular institutions. The Church's proclamation of the word of God by the virtue of the mandate dominates and rules the entire world. However the Church does not dominate the world but serves, thus entirely fulfilling its divine mandate. The congregation serves the mandate laid upon it in a twofold manner, in the double relationship of deputyship.

96) Ethics, p. 182.

97) op. cit., pp. 262-263.

The Christian congregation stands at the point at which the whole world ought to be standing; to this extent it serves as deputy for the world and exists for the sake of the world. On the other hand, the world achieves its own fulfilment at the point at which the congregation stands. The earth is the 'new creation', the 'new creature', the goal of the ways of God on earth. The congregation stands in this twofold relation of deputyship entirely in the fellowship and discipleship of its Lord, who was Christ precisely in this, that He existed not for His own sake but wholly for the sake of the world. (98)

As already mentioned, the conception of mandates should be considered in the light of the derivation of the question about a better worldliness. But at the same time, it must be understood in relation to the comprehension of the commandment of God. The basic character of the commandment is not order but permission. The commandment of God, first of all, permits us to live before God and guides us. The understanding of the commandment is expressed as follows.

The commandment of God becomes the element in which one lives without always being conscious of it, and, thus it implies freedom of movement and of action, freedom from the fear of decision, freedom from fear to act, it implies certainty, quietude, confidence, balance and peace. I honour my parents, I am faithful in marriage, I respect the lives and property of others, not because at the frontiers of my life there is a threatening 'thou shalt not', but because I accept as holy institution of God these realities, parents, marriage, life and property, which confront me in the midst and in the fulness of life. (99)

98) Ethics, p. 266.

99) op. cit., p. 247.

These are the fundamental motifs of his thought of the divine mandates.

Let us conclude this chapter by looking at the critical appreciation of Karl Barth on Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the mandates.¹⁰⁰ Barth regards Bonhoeffer's doctrine as an important step forwards from the theologies of the order of creation and of natural law, and considers it a more helpful development than the thought of Althaus and Brunner. This is because of its christological and biblical foundations. He says "what is involved in the constancy of ethical events must also be learned only from the Word of God if a formed reference to it is to the legitimate and meaningful."¹⁰¹

However Barth is critical of Bonhoeffer's particular selection (it is too restricted) and of the all-pervasive hierarchical structure which he gives them. He mentions these points.¹⁰²

1) The arbitrary selection of the mandates. It is not always clear what the Biblical justification for them is.

100) K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, III/4, pp. 21ff.

101) op. cit., p. 22.

102) See J. Moltmann: Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer, p. 93.

2) His onesided analysis of them as involving "the authority of some over others" in which any idea of the freedom of the inferior vis à vis superior personages is conspicuous by its absence.

3) The definition of constants in human relationships as "mandates" which are hardly distinguishable from "command". He raises a question as follows.

Is it not the case that the reference to their relationships as such does not necessarily have the character of an imperative, and therefore in the strict sense of a mandate, but that it must become an imperative, a concrete command or mandate, in the power of the divine command itself, in the ethical event? (103)

In the Ethics Bonhoeffer had advanced beyond the theory of the order of creation, but he is still somewhat confined within the thought forms of that doctrine. On the contrary, the issue at stake for Barth is "that which the Word of God tells us at this point we are merely referred to certain constant relationships as such,"¹⁰⁴ which does not have the character of an imperative.

Bonhoeffer, however, may raise a question like this. Do not their neighbourly relationships regain their original function in the light of the world and faith as "definite historical forms"¹⁰⁵ of the domains

103) K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, III/4, p. 22.

104) op. cit., III/4, p. 22.

105) Ethics, p. 245.

of Christ in the commandment? He writes "the concreteness of the divine commandment consists in its historicity; it confronts us in a historical form."¹⁰⁶ He answers the inevitable question, that is, where and in what historical form God makes His commandment known, as follows.

For the sake of simplicity and clarity, and even at the risk of a direct misunderstanding, we will begin by answering this question in the form of a thesis. God's commandment, which is manifested in Jesus Christ, comes to us in the Church, in the family, in labour and in government. (107)

This is the reason why he uses the concept of the "mandates". To demonstrate the structures of christological unity in reality was his concern. Therefore the question is not what these relationships are in themselves, but what they have to say and what is to be said through them in connection with the ethical event of the world.

He realizes the limitations of the doctrine of the mandates. For lack of a better word, even at the risk of a direct misunderstanding, he uses the term "mandate". The discussion sometimes, for example "Vocation as the Place of Responsibility" ends in a dilemma. There is always the possibility of conflict between concrete

106) Ethics, p. 245.

107) op. cit., p. 245.

historical vocation and the accompanying perception of responsibility, on the one hand, and the limits drawn, on the other, by the law of God as revealed in the Decalogue, and by the historical forms of the mandates of marriage, labour, government and Church.

It is precisely responsible action which will not separate this law from its Giver. It is only as the Redeemer in Jesus Christ that responsible action will be able to recognize the God who holds the world in order by His law; it will recognize Jesus Christ as the ultimate reality towards which it is responsible, and it is precisely by Him that it will be set free from the law for the responsible deed. (108)

The negative rigidity which was criticised by Barth might be removed by integrating them into the living history of God.

It cannot be denied that Bonhoeffer's attitude to government and authority is rather conservative. The question by Barth; "Is the notion of the authority of some over others really more characteristic of the ethical event than that of the freedom of even the very lowest before the very highest?"¹⁰⁹ seems to have an adequacy. Bonhoeffer, however, seems to have no intention of sanctioning the status quo in power structures. In fact, the mandate corrects and coordinates them.¹¹⁰

108) Ethics, p. 229.

109) K. Barth: Church Dogmatics, III/4, p. 22.

110) cf. Ethics, pp. 255ff.

He is convinced that the mandates are blessed with mission and promise. He is not concerned to demonstrate the relationship between the mandates for their own sake. He tries to prove the unity of God and the world, and to incorporate them into the dominion of Christ with obedience in faith. It is correct to say "the mandates lead him to accept institutions as tasks to be given shape by concrete decisions."¹¹¹

The mandates exist only for the sake and purpose of Christ. It is the endeavour of Bonhoeffer who lived in the midst of the conflict of the world to understand christologically the whole reality of the world.

111) Ernst Wolf; "Trinitarische oder christologische Begründung des Rechts?" in Recht und Institution, Glaube und Forschung, 9, (Witten, 1956), p. 27.
By J. Weissbach: Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer, p. 148.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE OF BONHOEFFER'S ETHICS

Now our task is to evaluate Bonhoeffer's Ethics and also try to discern its limitations. As Hanfried Mueller once said at the Bonhoeffer-Tagung in Berlin, "anyone who has anything to do with Dietrich Bonhoeffer today realizes again and again the amazing extent to which he provides answers to questions that only now, some twenty years later, begin to raise their heads. He anticipated solutions for problems we are only now beginning to recognize as our problems."¹

The same words could be still used now, some thirty years later. As can be seen repeatedly, though the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer are fragmentary and unfinished, his heritage is alive in the present time and the world of today.

For example, a recent issue of Observer Magazine published a special article on Christianity, under the title of "Churches in Ferment", and referred to Bonhoeffer at length. The author says, "the intellectual backbone of non-traditional Christianity has arisen largely through the work of such German Protestant theologians as Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. ... Bonhoeffer is a particularly interesting figure. He was probably the first Christian theologian

1) Hanfried Mueller: "Concerning the Reception and Interpretation of Dietrich Bonhoeffer", World Come of Age, ed. by R. G. Smith, p. 182.

to be martyred at pagan hands since the days of the primitive church. His influence and reputation seems to spread ever wider."²

It may be suitable to begin our survey by clarifying the position of Bonhoeffer's ethics through an examination of opposing conceptions. In the old edition of the Ethics, the first chapter (which is now the third chapter in the newly-arranged edition) began with this presupposition; "Rarely perhaps has any generation shown so little interest as ours does in any kind of theoretical or systematic ethics. The academic question of a system of ethics seems to be of all questions the most superfluous."³

When he made this critical observation, what kind of theoretical or systematic ethics had he in mind?⁴

First of all, the massive Thomistic moral theology of Roman Catholicism should be recalled. This ethics is rooted in ontology. The activity of the creature is the unfolding of its being and participation in the creative activity of God. For man, freedom is the source of his ethical responsibility. "Moral action

2) Colin Cross: "Churches in Ferment", Observer Magazine, 17th November, 1974, p. 34.

3) Ethics, p. 46.

4) This part I owe much to the discussion which G. W. Forell presented in the article of "Realized Faith, the Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer", The Place of Bonhoeffer, pp. 199-212.

is the personal, reasonable, free action of man (material object) measured by the moral standard (formal object)."⁵ Man has access to the good life by way of reason and conscience.

Conscience is essentially the judgement of practical reason concerning the morality of one's own action. Though all values are rooted in God there need be no explicit understanding of this connection in order to perceive the reality and the obligatory character of ethics.

The possibility of such (natural-moral good action) derives from everything that has been said as being basic for morality especially from the fact of conscience and free will. (6)

Consequently in Catholic thinking, ethics is an improvement through grace of the good moral life essentially possible for all men. Ethics is practicable because of the ontological connection between God and man. The basic structure of its ethical thought is as follows: God is the creator and man the creature, all men are created for the good life. The task of moral theology is to help reason to be truly reasonable and to sharpen the conscience. God gives supernatural

5) Mausbach-Ermecke: Katholische Moraltheologie, Muenster, Aschendorfsche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1959, I, p. 65.

6) op. cit., I, p. 281.

grace to those who believe in Him.

As I have mentioned already,⁷ it cannot be denied that there were two opposing tendencies among the Protestant Churches. The Reformation slogan "sola fide" fought against the doctrine of merit which leaves a place for human works to attain salvation. Strong emphasis on man's salvation by faith alone, only through God's grace, has played a very significant role both historically and theologically. It is really a rediscovery of the truth of Gospel. However, when we trace the later history of Protestantism, this reformation doctrine has been misunderstood and, as a result, there has been a certain tendency to neglect man's act, leaving open the danger of libertinism and anti-nomianism. At the same time, strangely enough, as a re-action against this tendency some people have emphasized work for the glory of God one-sidedly, leaving open the danger of ethical legalism. This confusion creates a separation of dogmatics from ethics and at the same time an abstract, theoretical, not realistic or concrete character in Protestant ethics.

This attitude can be seen in so-called Neo-Protestantism. Its ethical thought resembles Thomistic moral theology. For example, one of the typical representatives

7) See Introduction.

of Neo-Protestantism expresses his opinion as follows, "As everything has the origin of its being in God and no creature can disown the creator, there is no opposition in kind between natural i.e. this worldly, immanent morality as directed by naturalistic and human criteria, and, on the other hand, Christian morality as determined by the being of God."⁸

Bonhoeffer fought against this type of ethical approach. He does not support abstract ethics because it does not give any power to the people who live in this difficult situation. He criticizes and rejects any kind of abstract ethics, and insists on concrete ethics, on the conviction that Christ loves man as he is and the world as it is, not an ideal but a real world.

Therefore he indicates plainly as follows:

Christ teaches no abstract ethics such as must at all costs be put into practice. ... Christ did not, like a moralist, love a theory of good, but He loved the real man. He was not, like a philosopher, interested in the 'universally valid', but rather in that which is of help to the real and concrete human being. (9)

Again he says,

What can and must be said is not what is good once and for all, but the way in which Christ takes form among us here and now. The attempt to define that which is good once and

8) Georg Wuensch: Theologische Ethik (1925), pp. 122ff, as quoted in Karl Barth: Church Dogmatics, II/2, pp. 534ff.

9) Ethics, p. 65.

for all has, in the nature of the case, always ended in failure. (10)

The reason for this failure is explained directly.

Either the proposition was asserted in such general and formal terms that it retained no significance as regards its contents, or else one tried to include in it and elaborate the whole immense range of conceivable contents, and thus to say in advance what would be good in every single conceivable case; this led to a casuistic system so unmanageable that it could satisfy the demands neither of general validity nor of concreteness. (11)

He excludes the formalism and vagueness of all Neo-Protestant ethics and moreover contradicts casuistry with its unavoidable tendency to substitute a complicated system of avoidance of evil deeds for a simple and direct conformity with the Incarnate which is "achieved only when the form of Jesus Christ itself works us in such a manner that it molds our form in its own likeness (Gal. 4:19)."¹²

A second system of ethics which Bonhoeffer wished to reject is the so-called "pseudo-Lutheran" scheme. The characteristic of this thinking is based on the concept of a juxtaposition. The whole reality is divided into two spheres, the one divine, holy, supernatural and Christian, and the other worldly, profane, natural and

10) Ethics, p. 66.

11) op. cit., p. 66.

12) op. cit., p. 61.

un-Christian. This view becomes dominant in the Middle Ages and in the period of after the Reformation, and its ethical concern is with the proper relation of these two spheres to each other. Though spatial thinking in its scholastic form subjects the realm of nature to the realm of grace, and in its spiritualistic-enthusiastic form divides the congregation of the elect from the hostile world, in the "pseudo-Lutheran scheme the autonomy of the orders of this world is proclaimed in opposition to the law of Christ."¹³ Here reality in Christ and worldly realities are divided, so Christian ethics has no right to speak to man in his social and cultural involvements. Christian faith and Christian ethics have their efficiency only in the spiritual realm. However man actually lives in this social and cultural world and he must act in obedience to their autonomous laws.

A typical example of this kind of German Lutheran thought can be seen in F. Naumann. He writes as follows:

Every one of us is a servant in many realms and in those realms must obey an iron compulsion, a power of logic, which is contained in the situation itself. But wherever we are free from such compulsion and logic, wherever we have the feeling that our path is not determined there is the part of our life where we want to be first of all servants of Christ." (14)

13) Ethics, p. 168.

14) F. Naumann: Briefe ueber Religion, as quoted in George W. Forell, The Place of Bonhoeffer, p. 202.

Bonhoeffer criticizes such an ethic as indifferent and unconcerned with regard to worldly institutions and conditions. It is suitable to refer to his article which comes as Part Two in the Ethics.

The liberal theologians, especially Troeltsch and Naumann, treated the original gospel as a 'purely religious' power which encompasses the individual man in his outlook but is at the same time indifferent and unconcerned with regard to worldly institutions and conditions. (15)

Needless to say this criticism should be understood from the context of his insistence on non-religious Christianity. For him "purely religious" matter has no power for the people. The main purpose of that article, however, is to discuss and criticize Otto Dilschneider's position. Bonhoeffer quotes the formulation which Dilschneider gives at the beginning of his book.

"Protestant ethics is concerned with man's personality and with this personality alone. All the other things of this world remain untouched by this Protestant ethos. The things of the world do not enter ethically into the zone of the demands of ethical imperatives."¹⁶

Against this position he insists that the real question is whether it is the Church's sole task to practice love and charity within the given worldly institutions or whether the church is charged with a

15) Ethics, p. 287.

16) Otto Dilschneider: Die evangelische Tat, p. 87.

mission towards the given worldly orders themselves, a mission of correction and improvement, a mission to work towards a new worldly order? Then Bonhoeffer rejects this position categorically because the isolation of the person from the world of things is idealistic and not Christian, and also warns that it is in danger of falling to antinomianism.

He realizes that it is quite difficult to break the spell of this thinking in terms of two spheres. Nevertheless it is in profound contradiction to the thought of the Bible and to the thought of the Reformation. The pseudo-Lutheran approach falls in a dilemma, that is, man abandons reality as a whole, and places himself in one or other of the two spheres, or else man tries to stand in both spheres at once. They think that this is the only form of Christian existence which is in accord with reality.

However he denies such thinking. He insists that there are not two realities, but only one reality. Those who are in Christ stand at once in both the reality of God and the reality of the world.

The unity of the reality of God and of the world, which has been accomplished in Christ, is repeated, or, more exactly, is realized, ever afresh in the life of men. And yet what is Christian is not identical with what is of the world. The natural is not identical with the supernatural or the revelational with the rational. But between the two there is in each case a unity which derives solely from

the reality of Christ, that is to say solely from faith in this ultimate reality. This unity is seen in the way in which the secular and the Christian elements prevent one another from assuming any kind of static independence in their mutual relations. They adopt a polemical attitude towards each other and bear witness precisely in this to their shared reality and to their unity in the reality which is in Christ. (17)

Thirdly the ethics of Karl Barth should be considered. There is no doubt that Bonhoeffer was much influenced by and learned much from Barth. Some scholars even interpret Bonhoeffer's ethics as a variation of Barthian Christocracy.¹⁸

The ethical position of Karl Barth is seen in this definition.

It is the Christian doctrine of God, or, more exactly, the knowledge of the electing grace of God in Jesus Christ, which decides the nature and aim of theological ethics, of ethics as an element of church dogmatics. (19)

On this basis, he refuses all attempts which are built on a general human ethics or a philosophical ethics, and insists on laying the foundation on the word of God.

The goodness of human action consists in the goodness with which God acts towards man. But God deals with man through His Word. (20)

17) Ethics, p. 171.

18) See Juergen Moltmann: "Herrschaft Christi und soziale Wirklichkeit nach Dietrich Bonhoeffer", Theologische Existenz Heute, N.F. 71, Muenich, 1959.

19) Karl Barth: Church Dogmatics, II/2, p. 543.

20) op. cit., p. 546.

Man does good in so far as his action is Christian. A Christian is one who knows that God has accepted him in Jesus Christ, that a decision has been made concerning him in Jesus Christ as the eternal Word of God, and that he has been called into covenant with Him by Jesus Christ as the Word of God spoken in time. (21)

In the section entitled "The Problem of Special Ethics", Barth positively evaluates Bonhoeffer's ethical thinking. "To this question of the constancy of the divine command and human action Dietrich Bonhoeffer gives another and more helpful answer which is both more original in relation to theological tradition and also more carefully formulated in substance."²²

Bonhoeffer considers the mandates as the place where the God of Jesus Christ secured obedience to Himself. In other words, for him, the mandates are nothing but the concrete place of faith and obedience, where a particular sphere on earth is claimed, taken possession of, and moulded by the divine command, and it is removed from the dialectic of law and Gospel.

Therefore the mandate is the place where the Christian works out the obedience of faith in this concrete world. At this point Bonhoeffer comes very close to Barth.

21) Karl Barth: Church Dogmatics, II/2, p. 547.

22) op. cit., III/4, p. 21.

It is right to say that the concrete application of Barthian ethics has probably received its most famous formulation in Christliche Gemeinde und Buerger Gemeinde.²³ Barth insists that the State must be regarded "as an allegory (Gleichnis), as a correspondence and an analogue to the Kingdom of God which the Church preaches and believes in."²⁴ Therefore the criterion for ethical action in the state (or in any other ethical decision) is its contribution to the clarification of the Lordship of Christ over the whole.

In that book he even illustrates the criteria for the State from the Gospel. For example, he insists that since Christ came to seek and save the lost, the Church will insist on the State's special responsibility for the weaker members of society. "The Church must stand for social justice in the political sphere. And in choosing between the various socialistic possibilities (social-liberalism? co-operativism? syndicalism? free trade? moderate or radical Marxism?) it will always choose the movement from which it can expect the greatest measure of social justice (leaving all other considerations on one side)."²⁵ Again he says that since it is the fellow-

23) G. W. Forell: The Place of Bonhoeffer, p. 204.

24) K. Barth: Community, State and Church, p. 169.

25) op. cit., p. 173.

ship of those who live in one faith under one Lord on the basis of one Baptism; "the Church must and will stand for the equality of the freedom and responsibility of all adult citizens, in spite of its sober insight into the variety of human needs, abilities and tasks."²⁶ It is also seen in this kind of claim, "The Church knows God's anger and judgement, but it also knows that his anger lasts but for a moment whereas His mercy is for eternity." For this reason it will support violent political solutions only when they are for the moment the ultimate and only possibility available. "The perfection of the Father in heaven, who does not cease to be the heavenly Judge, demands the earthly perfection of a peace policy which really does extend to the limits of the humanly possible."²⁷ Barth tries to mould the state according to the allegory or the structure of the kingdom of God.

At this point Bonhoeffer departs from Barth. For Bonhoeffer does not think out the ethical task of the state from an exegetical analysis of the biblical assertions concerning the kingdom of God and their analogical application to the state. Rather he insists that the basis of the state or the government is in the service

26) K. Barth: Community, State and Church, p. 173.

27) op. cit., p. 178.

of Jesus Christ.

The much-discussed question of what constitutes this goodness or outward justice which government is charged with promoting is easily resolved if one keeps in view the derivation of government from Jesus Christ. This good can not in any case be in conflict with Jesus Christ. Good consists in allowance being made in every action of government for the ultimate purpose, namely, the service of Jesus Christ. (28)

He thinks the raison d'être of the state is to be found in a divine commission. The ultimate purpose of the state is to fulfill the commission which is entrusted to it by God. In the chapter entitled "Christ, Reality and Good", he mentions,

Good is not the correspondence between a criterion which is placed at our disposal by nature or grace and whatever entity I may designate as reality. Good is reality itself, reality seen and recognized in God. (29)

As has been mentioned repeatedly, for Bonhoeffer "the problem of Christian ethics is the realization among God's creatures of the revelational reality of God in Christ."³⁰ In pursuit of the task of the realization (Wirklichwerden), he urges that we notice the distinction between the "ultimate" and the "penultimate" (Die letzten und die vorletzten Dinge). Man is justified by grace and faith alone. This is the

28) Ethics, p. 305.

29) op. cit., p. 165.

30) op. cit., p. 163.

ultimate word and it remains in every respect the final word. Thus we must speak of the "penultimate" in the relation to the ultimate, because this ultimate reaches those who live their lives in the realm of the things before the last. In other words, he insists that we speak of the penultimate for the sake of the ultimate. Speaking of the penultimate means to deal with the living faith which justifies a life and to ask about the penultimate in the lives of Christians. It is his conviction that by remaining deliberately in the penultimate, one can perhaps point all the more genuinely to the ultimate, which God will speak, though indeed even then through a human mouth, in His own time.

It may be appropriate to summarize this way. Barth's theology and his christocentric ethics are, according to Bonhoeffer, the most hopeful sign of a break away from the religious or abstract interpretation of the world and the Christian faith. The world is not understood in this theology from the point of view of its own needs and lackings but solely from the view point of God's revelation. He calls the God of Jesus Christ into the lists against religion, pneuma against sarx.

Bonhoeffer, however, fears that Barth operated too hastily with the ultimate in order to make it supply the criteria for ethical action. He suggests

that Barth was too dominated in a negative way by liberal theology and perhaps as reaction against it slipped into a "positivism of revelation". His emphasis on dogma and revelation almost made of them a new Law for the believer which remained irrelevant for the secular man in everyday situations. He gave no concrete guidance, either in dogmatics or in ethics, on the non-religious interpretation of theological concepts. Further, Bonhoeffer criticizes Barth's approach in "the Outline for a Book" as tending to encourage us to entrench ourselves behind the faith of the Church and evade the honest question, what is our real and personal belief?³¹

On the other hand, for Barth, the ethic of Bonhoeffer is somewhat arbitrary. He says "would it not be advisable, then, to begin with the more cautious question what we have to learn from God's Word concerning this constancy rather than rushing on to the rigid assertion of human relationships arranged in a definite order, and the hasty assertion of their imperative character?"³²

Fourthly, the ethics of existentialism must be

31) cf. Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 382.

32) Barth: Church Dogmatics, III/4, p. 22.

taken into consideration. This type of ethics could be characterized as the call to authentic selfhood.

For example, Paul Tillich says:

Is there a word from the Lord? And perhaps an answer has been received. It was a voice out of the depth of our situation, elevating our concrete problems into an ultimate perspective. In doing so, it probably has devaluated some factors determining our decision and has stressed others. Or it has left the balance of possibilities unchanged, but has given us the courage to make a decision with all the risks of a decision, including error, failure, guilt. (33)

He also stresses that the Lord wants human beings to decide for themselves. Another example is seen in Schubert Ogden's statement: "Man is a genuinely free and responsible being, and therefore his salvation is something that, coram deo, he himself has to decide by his understanding of his existence."³⁴ Both Tillich and Ogden are writing after Bonhoeffer's death, but the general point can be considered in relation to his work.

From the stand point of existentialism, Christian ethics is "built around the courageous overcoming of the anxieties of fate and death, of emptiness and meaninglessness of guilt and condemnation."³⁵ In

33) P. Tillich: The New Being, pp. 118f.

34) S. Ogden: Christ Without Myth, p. 136.

35) G. W. Forell: The Place of Bonhoeffer, p. 209.

other words it is seen that anxiety is the clue to the understanding of man and the task of ethics is to find the way to overcome anxiety through courage. Needless to say the influence of Kierkegaard and his existentialist disciples is notable in this type of ethics. In some sense, therefore, existentialist ethics leads people to existential analysis of the human situation first and only then the gospel of the new life in Christ is declared.

Bonhoeffer, however, does not accept this order, because it is his conviction that there is no way to the ultimate from the penultimate, but only from the ultimate to the penultimate, even though they are closely connected in his thinking. This position is clearly seen in this quotation.

The event of the justification of a sinner is something final. This was meant in the strict sense of the word. God's compassion on a sinner must and can be heard only as God's final word; for otherwise it is not heard at all. ... This word implies the complete breaking off of everything that precedes it, of everything that is before the last; it is therefore never the natural or necessary end of the way which has been pursued so far, but it is rather the total condemnation and invalidation of this way. It is God's own free word, which is subject to no compulsion; for this reason it is the irreversible final word, an ultimate reality. (36)

In the letters from the prison, Bonhoeffer classifies the existentialist philosophers and the psychotherapists

36) Ethics, pp. 100-101.

as secularized offshoots of Christian theology, and he names them as "secularized methodism".³⁷

He rejected this approach because it affected only a small number of intellectuals and degenerates. He criticized this approach because it is pointless, ignoble and unchristian. It is pointless to attempt to put a grown-up man back into adolescence. It is ignoble to attempt to exploit man's weakness for purposes that are alien to him and to which he has not freely assented. Furthermore, it is unchristian to confuse Christ with one particular stage in man's religiousness, i.e. with a human law.

He defines his position as follows.

When Jesus blessed sinners, they were real sinners, but Jesus did not make everyone a sinner first. He called them away from their sin, not into their sin. ... Never did he question a man's health, vigour, or happiness, regarded in themselves, or regard them as evil fruits; else why should he heal the sick and restore strength to the weak? Jesus claims for himself and the Kingdom of God the whole of human life in all its manifestations. (38)

The word of the justifying grace of God never departs from its position as the final word; it never yields itself simply as a result that has been achieved, a result that might just as well be set at the beginning as at the end. The way from the penultimate to the ultimate can never be dispensed with. The word remains

37) Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 326.

38) op. cit., pp. 341-342.

irreversibly the last; for otherwise it would be reduced to the quality of what is calculable, a merchandise, and would thereby be robbed of its divine character. Grace would be venal and cheap. It would not be a gift. (39)

Here we must move on to examine what is the kernel of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Ethics.

As we have seen repeatedly, Ethics is a gathering of fragments for what Bonhoeffer regarded as his central contribution to theological thought, written over a number of years. It is not necessary, however, to over-stress their fragmentariness, though it is true that they can reasonably be regarded as four fresh starts. There is a real cohesion between these fragments through grappling with a fundamental problem.

It seems to me that following sentences show the fundamental position of his ethical thinking.

But the problem of ethics at once assumes a new aspect if it becomes apparent that these realities, myself and the world, themselves lie embedded in a quite different ultimate reality, namely, the reality of God, the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer. What is of ultimate importance is now no longer that I should become good, or that the condition of the world should be made better by my action, but that the reality of God should show itself everywhere to be the ultimate reality. Where there is faith in God as the ultimate reality, all concern with ethics will have as its starting-point that God shows Himself to be good, even if this involves the risk that I myself and the world are not good but thoroughly

39) Ethics, pp. 102-103.

bad. ... Any enquiry about one's own goodness, or the goodness of the world, is now impossible unless enquiry has first been made about the goodness of God. For without God what meaning could there be in a goodness of man and a goodness of the world? But God as the ultimate reality is no other than He who shows forth, manifests and reveals Himself, that is to say, God in Jesus Christ, and from this it follows that the question of good can find its answer only in Christ. (40)

Bonhoeffer, therefore, plainly claims that the problem of Christian ethics is not that man should become good, but "the realization among God's creatures of the revelational reality of God in Christ, just as the problem of dogmatics is the truth of the revelational reality of God in Christ."⁴¹

Consequently, Bonhoeffer's Ethics manifests the depth of his christocentric theology. Every theme has at its very heart the action of God in the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His work of substitutionary atonement and reconciliation becomes the basis for man's ethical responsibility.⁴²

Thus Bonhoeffer asserts:

The place which in all other ethics is occupied by the antithesis of 'should be' and 'is', idea and accomplishment, motive and performance, is occupied in Christian ethics by the relation of reality and realization, past and present, history and event (faith), or, to

40) Ethics, pp. 161-162.

41) op. cit., p. 163.

42) cf. R. F. Kohler: "The Christocentric Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer", Scottish Journal of Theology, 1970, vol. 23, no. 1, p. 27.

replace the equivocal concept by the unambiguous name, the relation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The question of good becomes the question of participation in the divine reality which is revealed in Christ. (43)

In this way he tried to overcome the Kantian separation of 'is' and 'ought', that is the separation of the world from God, by using the Hegelian concept of 'becoming' and yet not reducing it to a self-realisation for the immanent world-spirit. The act of revelation participates in the historical reality of the world thus creating the reality of the new man in Christ. It is this reality which is both the norm and the ground of living. Ethics, then, is not wishful thinking but concrete realization.⁴⁴

Therefore the place of reality lies in the midst of history as divine miracle.⁴⁵

Christ is the Mediator of creation and therefore the centre of all.

All created things are through and for Christ and exist only in Christ (Col. 1:16). This means that there is nothing, neither persons nor things, which stands outside the relation to Christ. Indeed it is only in relation to Christ that created things have their being. This is true not only of man but also of the state, economy, science, nature, etc. (46)

43) Ethics, p. 163.

44) cf. A. Dumas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theologian of Reality, pp. 141-142.

45) Ethics, p. 51.

46) op. cit., p. 288.

Everything is under the rule of Christ, everything finds its reality in Him. Ethics for Bonhoeffer, therefore, has its source in the encounter with Christ, the Incarnate, the Crucified, the Risen One.

Because Christ is the Incarnate, it is man's right and duty that he should be man. The incarnation allows "the world to be what it really is before God."⁴⁷ He rejected the quest for the superman and insisted on being a real man.

The real man is at liberty to be his Creator's creature. To be conformed with the Incarnate is to have the right to be the man one really is.
(48)

Because Christ is the Crucified, conformation to Him means being a man sentenced by God. In his daily life man carries with him God's sentence of death, the necessity of dying before God for the sake of sin. In other words, everyday man dies the death of a sinner.

He cannot raise himself up above any other man or set himself before him as a model, for he knows himself to be the greatest of all sinners. He can excuse the sin of another, but never his own. He bears all the suffering imposed on him, in the knowledge that it serves to enable him to die with his own will and to accept God's judgment upon him. (49)

47) Ethics, p. 263.

48) op. cit., p. 62.

49) op. cit., p. 62.

Because Christ is the Risen One, conformation to Him means to be a new man before God. Through the resurrection of Christ sin and death are overcome, and creation has its new beginning. Jesus Christ is the living Lord to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth.

All the powers of the world are made subject to Him and must serve Him, each in its own way. The lordship of Jesus Christ is not the rule of a foreign power; it is the lordship of the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer, the lordship of Him through whom and for whom all created beings exist, of Him in whom indeed all created beings alone find their origin, their goal and their essence.
(50)

Bonhoeffer, therefore, says in the midst of death man is in life. In the midst of sin he is righteous. In the midst of the old he is new. Man lives because Christ lives, and lives in Christ alone. This new life of man, however, is 'hidden with Christ in God' (Col.3:3).

The new man lives in the world like any other man. Often there is little to distinguish him from the rest. Nor does he attach importance to distinguishing himself, but only to distinguishing Christ for the sake of his brethren. Transfigured though he is in the form of the Risen One, here he bears only the sign of the cross and the judgement. (51)

On the basis of this christocentric point of view, Bonhoeffer claims that the task of ethics is not to launch appeals to overcome the divorce between ideal

50) Ethics, p. 264.

51) op. cit., p. 63.

and real, but to describe God's concrete commandment in the midst of reality.

Once this affirmation of an ethic based on God's presence in reality has been proposed, there remains the difficult task of finding ways to recognize God's presence in the midst of a world that was no longer the reality first given in creation, and not yet the reality re-given in reconciliation, but the ambiguous and contorted everyday world where good and evil exist side by side.⁵²

According A. Dumas, Bonhoeffer makes at least three attempts to describe how this can be done.

First, the doctrine of the four mandates: "The world is relative to Christ, no matter whether it knows it or not. This relativeness of the world to Christ assumes concrete form in certain mandates of God in the world. The Scriptures name four such mandates: labour, marriage, government and the Church."⁵³ The mandates are vocations from God which take the concrete form of earthly demands that have the force of divine commandments. Bonhoeffer has chosen the term mandate in order that the concrete forms of ethical action may be seen as responsibility to God's commandment over and against self-determination. "The divine mandates are dependent

52) cf. A. Dumas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theologian of Reality, p. 156.

53) Ethics, p. 179.

solely on the one commandment of God as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. They are introduced into the world from above as orders or 'institutions' of the reality of Christ, that is to say, of the reality of the love of God for the world and for men which is revealed in Jesus Christ."⁵⁴

The divine mandates, therefore, express the ethics of an ontology of reality based on Christology. They manifest Christ existing in the world in the form of community and commandment.

They are clearly an attempt to clarify the Lutheran doctrine of the 'orders of creation' and the statutes, personalizing them by their continuing relationship to God who is in control of them, and unifying them against the heteronomy of the different 'realms'.⁵⁵

But even though the doctrine of the mandates had been drafted last, in 1943, it remained too closely allied to a theological heritage that was not moving in the direction Bonhoeffer sought, namely towards a reality re-united by the christological realization of God within it. In the letter of 23rd January, 1944,

54) Ethics, pp. 254-255.

55) cf. J. Moltmann: "The Lordship of Christ and Human Society" in J. Moltmann and J. Weissbach: Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer, pp. 19-94.

Bonhoeffer told of the failure of this way of dividing things, which gave so much authority to certain human realities that it ran the risk of destroying freedom in the name of obedience to those divinized demands.⁵⁶

Second, the structures of responsible life.

Bonhoeffer explains the structure of responsible life as follows: (a) correspondence with reality, which the incarnation makes effective; (b) responsibility for others, which is most fully expressed in deputyship as Jesus binds himself fully to the destiny of humanity, and to things as well in so far as the world of things is directed towards mankind; (c) the acceptance of guilt, which means that when Jesus acts responsibly he becomes guilty although without sin; and finally; (d) freedom, understood not as autonomy preserved in the Kantian sense, but as responsibility that is assumed without any reservations whatever, so that the contorted everyday world can once again become a truly unified reality. Freedom is the surrender of oneself and all that one does to God, a submission that is the opposite of resignation and the achievement of resistance.⁵⁷

Responsible life is life in correspondence with reality (Wirklichkeitgemässheit). Bonhoeffer insists

56) A. Dumas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theologian of Reality, p. 157.

57) op. cit., p. 158.

that responsibility does not mean the illusion that one has some ethical principle at one's disposal which one can "put into effect fanatically, overcoming all the resistance which is offered to it by reality."⁵⁸ For the responsible man the given situation is not simply the material on which he is to impress his idea or his programme by force, but this situation is itself drawn into the action and shares in giving form to the deed.⁵⁹ This does not, however, mean so-called Realpolitik. He explains as follows:

The true meaning of correspondence with reality lies neither in this servility towards the factual nor yet in a principle of opposition to the factual, a principle of revolt against the factual in the name of some higher reality. Both extremes alike are very far removed from the essence of the matter. In action which is genuinely in accordance with reality there is an indissoluble link between the acknowledgement and the contradiction of the factual. The reason for this is that reality is first and last not lifeless; but it is the real man, the incarnate God. (60)

Action which is in accordance with Christ is in accordance with reality, because it allows the world to be the world. This does not mean a view of the autonomy of various areas of life but rather a vision of the simplicity of life, as reconciled by Christ.

58) Ethics, p. 197.

59) op. cit., p. 197.

60) op. cit., p. 198.

The world remains the world because it is the world which is loved, condemned and reconciled in Christ. No man has the mission to overleap the world and to make it into the kingdom of God. Nor, on the other hand, does this give support to that pious indolence which abandons the wicked world to its fate and seeks only to rescue its own virtue. Man is appointed to the concrete and therefore limited responsibility which knows the world as being created, loved, condemned and reconciled by God and which acts within the world in accordance with this knowledge. (61)

Third, the relationship between the ultimate and the penultimate. This attempt seems to be the most fruitful of all, for here Bonhoeffer tackles the vast problem of the relationship between natural life and the life of faith, which the christological emphasis on the structures of responsible life virtually ignores, and which the doctrine of the mandates hardens too arbitrarily.⁶²

According to Bethge's examination, a problem of the ultimate and the penultimate was considered in Ettel between the end of November 1940 and the middle of February 1941. And it represents the most complete section of the work for the Ethics.

Catholic theology usually deals with the penultimate (e.g. natural and culture) in the light of the ultimate (the supernatural) which perfects it, while in Protestant

61) Ethics, p. 202.

62) cf. A. Dumas: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theology of Reality, p. 158.

theology righteousness by faith alone is too much emphasized and as a result the ultimate (grace) frequently repudiates the penultimate as insignificant or even sinful. Bonhoeffer, however, with an approach quite original in ethical theory, begins with the ultimate, which undergirds and safeguards the penultimate, just as the New Testament and the Gospel of the crucifixion and the resurrection send us back to the Old Testament and to life here on earth. The last word, the ultimate word, which is justification, turns the believer towards the penultimate, which is natural life and the whole cultural enterprise, since the God of grace commands us not to look for him on the edges but to meet him in the middle of the world. "The Christian life means neither a destruction nor a sanctioning of the penultimate. In Christ the reality of God meets the reality of the world and allows us to share in this real encounter. It is an encounter beyond all radicalism and beyond all compromise. Christian life is participation in the encounter of Christ with the world."⁶³

The ultimate does not destroy the penultimate, which is always the pietistic temptation of Protestantism, nor does the ultimate simply follow along after the penultimate, which is always the naturalistic

63) Ethics, p. 110.

temptation of Catholicism. The ultimate precedes the penultimate and gives it direction. The ultimate is not found at the edge of the world, but in its centre as a way of structuring the penultimate.

Bonhoeffer insists on the necessity of recovering the attention to the natural on the basis of the gospel.

He says:

The concept of the natural must, therefore, be recovered on the basis of the gospel. We speak of the natural, as distinct from the creaturely, in order to take into account the fact of the Fall; and we speak of the natural rather than of the sinful so that we may include in it the creaturely. The natural is that which, after the Fall, is directed towards the coming of Christ. The unnatural is that which, after the Fall, closes its doors against the coming of Christ. There is indeed only a relative difference between that which is directed towards Christ and that which closes its doors to Christ; for the natural does not compel the coming of Christ, and the unnatural does not render it impossible. In both cases the real coming is an event of grace. And it is only through the coming of Christ that the natural is confirmed in its character as a penultimate, and that the unnatural is exposed once and for all as destruction of the penultimate. Thus, even in the sight of Christ, there is a distinction between the natural and the unnatural, a distinction which cannot be obliterated without doing grave harm. (64)

Now we must make clear what Bonhoeffer's Ethics can contribute to the theological discussion in the second half of the twentieth century.

In this chapter our survey was begun to clarify the position of Bonhoeffer's ethics through an exami-

64) Ethics, pp. 120-121.

nation of opposing conceptions. We must make clear, first of all, that his criticism of the ethical systems of his time remains relevant. Thomistic-ontological ethics, pseudo-Lutheran spatial ethics, Barthian christocracy, and christian existentialism have eloquent advocates today. But Bonhoeffer's critique has also been widely accepted.

Now our task is to discern whether Bonhoeffer suggests a positive direction which Christian ethics ought to follow in order to fulfill its mission in our world?

The clue to Bonhoeffer is the Christocentric focus of his thought, that is, his constant reference to Jesus Christ, who is at once the Incarnate, the Crucified, and the Risen One.

It is necessary to free oneself from the way of thinking which sets out from human problems and which asks for solutions on this basis. Such thinking is unbiblical. The way of Jesus Christ, and therefore the way of all Christian thinking, leads not from the world to God but from God to the world. ... The Church's word to the world can be no other than God's word to the world. This word is Jesus Christ and salvation in His name. It is in Jesus Christ that God's relation to the world is defined. We know of no relation of God to the world other than through Jesus Christ. For the Church too, therefore, there is no relation to the world other than through Jesus Christ. In other words, the proper relation of the Church to the world cannot be deduced from natural law or rational law or from universal human rights, but only from the gospel of Jesus Christ. (65)

For Bonhoeffer the question of "who is Christ for us today" was his lifelong theme. It seems to me that in his study of ethics, Bonhoeffer moves from the primary question of "who Christ is" to the one of "how Christ takes form among us here and now."⁶⁶ By making this shift, however, he is not trying to limit the importance of the primary question of who Christ is. When he takes up the problem of "how" Christ is among us, he does so without weakening the ground of revelation in Jesus Christ. It is a very important point that, in Bonhoeffer, this 'how' does not destroy the integrity of Christ even when dealing with the institutions of this world, for all institutions, rightly understood in the light of the question 'who', are seen to flow from Christ and be fulfilled in Christ.

On the basis of this conviction, Bonhoeffer insists that the commandment which comes from God in Jesus Christ has already been fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ through His substitutionary work. There is no power in history or nature or ourselves, outside the Person of Christ, which can accomplish this work on behalf of man. For Bonhoeffer ethics is always grounded in the Word of God and the work of Christ and finds its fulfilment in man's participation in the substitutionary work of Christ through the deputyship of being for the other.

66) Ethics, p. 66.

Thereby Bonhoeffer shows the direction of his ethics as follows.

The point of departure for Christian ethics is not the reality of one's own self, or the reality of the world; nor is it the reality of standards and values. It is the reality of God as He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ. It is fair to begin by demanding assent to this proposition of anyone who wishes to concern himself with the problem of a Christian ethic. It poses the ultimate and crucial question of the reality which we mean to reckon with in our lives, whether it is to be the reality of the revelational word of God or earthly imperfections, whether it is to be resurrection or death. (67)

Let us now turn our attention to his understanding of the Church and the world. Bonhoeffer has quite simply and clearly called the church to new obedience to the commandment of Jesus Christ. On the basis of a sound evangelical theology, he has not been afraid to speak of good works. Bonhoeffer recommends that the community that is established by the hearing of the Word of God must pattern its life after Christ's own life and thus be transformed into his image. It is not enough for the church to have a proper dogmatics or a deep hermeneutic or a venerable liturgy -- Bonhoeffer, or course, does not deny their importance -- but there must be obedience. This will take place in two areas: first, in the church's interior life as a community of faith, and second, in the life of the members of the

67) Ethics, pp. 162-163.

church who are scattered in this secular world.

In the final period of his theology Bonhoeffer was breaking fresh ground in his concept of 'worldly' Christianity, and it is here that he can help the church to a new understanding of the relation between God and the world. Ultimately this understanding will be one of Bonhoeffer's greatest contributions, and it is possible that his thought will lead to a significant revolution in the understanding of the Christian faith. He insists that we should never know God as an idea, but only in and through our concrete encounter with others in our life in this world. God is not to be known except in human form, as man existing for others, and the sole ground for his omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence is his freedom from self, maintained to the point of death.

Bonhoeffer's theology is one of commitment and involvement.⁶⁸ To be a real Christian, for Bonhoeffer, means to be committed to and involved in a way of life in the world, and this is God's own way, which he has revealed in Jesus Christ. This precludes any spectator attitude towards the world and any prescriptive and perceptual approach to the ministry. The church, therefore, must learn afresh that God's primary concern is

68) cf. J. Godsey: The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 281.

with this world. She must be ready to act responsibly for mankind, even to the renunciation of many of her cherished ideas and traditions. By participating in the being of Jesus as one whose only concern is for others, the Church has a new life in the world. The Church must learn to live the gospel and not just preach it, for only its example will empower its words. The Church must be the instrument of proclaiming God's word; however beyond that the Protestant Church has to regain its own peculiar life as an end in itself.

Bonhoeffer insists at the end of his unfinished

Ethics:

The danger of the Reformation, on the other hand, lies in the fact that it devotes its whole attention to the mandate of the proclamation of the word and, consequently, almost entirely neglects the proper domain and function of the Church as an end in herself, and this consists precisely in her existence for the sake of the world. One need only call to mind the liturgical poverty and uncertainty of our present-day Protestant services, the feebleness of our ecclesiastical organization and law, the almost complete absence of any genuine ecclesiastical discipline, and the inability of most Protestants even to understand the significance of such disciplinary practices as spiritual exercises, asceticism, meditation and contemplation. One need only consider the general uncertainty about the special functions of the clergy, or the startlingly confused or presumptuous attitude of countless Protestant Christians towards those Christians who refuse to take oaths, those Christians who refuse to perform military service, etc., and one cannot help perceiving at once where the Protestant Church is at fault. Exclusive interest in the divine mandate of proclamation, and, together with this, interest in the Church's mission in the world, has resulted in failure to perceive the inner connexion between this mission and the Church's internal functions.

This failure has necessarily detracted from the power, the abundance and the fulness of the proclamation itself, because the proclamation finds no fertile soil. In terms of parable, the commission of proclamation has been implanted in the congregation like the corn-seed in the field; if the soil has not been prepared the seed withers away and loses its own inherent fruitfulness.
(69)

Bonhoeffer makes the proper distinction of Law and Gospel in a new manner uniquely appropriate to our situation. As we mentioned before, Bonhoeffer insists that there are not two spheres, but only the one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united. "Just as in Christ the reality of God entered into the reality of the world, so, too, is that which is Christian to be found only in that which is of the world, the 'supernatural' only in the natural, the holy only in the profane, and the revelational only in the rational."⁷⁰ But Bonhoeffer continued by saying that "what is Christian is not identical with what is of the world. The natural is not identical with the supernatural or the revelational with the rational. But between the two there is in each case a unity which derives solely from the reality of Christ, that

69) Ethics, p. 267.

70) op. cit., p. 171.

is to say solely from faith in this ultimate reality."⁷¹
 Bonhoeffer indicates not a static but a polemical unity of the secular and the Christian and thus bears witness to their common reality, their unity in the reality in Christ. He support Luther's position in a strict sense.

Luther was protesting against a Christianity which was striving for independence and detaching itself from the reality in Christ. He protested with the help of the secular and in the name of a better Christianity. So, too, today, when Christianity is employed as a polemical weapon against the secular, this must be done in the name of a better secularity and above all it must not lead back to a static predominance of the spiritual sphere as an end in itself. (72)

Only as a polemical unity can Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms be accepted, and Bonhoeffer was convinced that it was so intended. Thus the proclamation of the Law must not be allowed to deteriorate into legalism, and the proclamation of the Gospel must not deteriorate into purely religious speech separated from the worldly existence of man.

He insists that "this false antithesis of moralizing and religious themes must be replaced by the true distinction and connexion between the law and gospel."⁷³

71) Ethics, p. 171.

72) op. cit., p. 171.

73) op. cit., p. 283.

"Thus ultimately it is not the preacher but God alone who distinguishes between the law and the Gospel."⁷⁴

To modern man it is the problem of religion which has taken the place of the problem of the Law as illustrated in Paul's letters by the controversy about circumcision. Paul fought against the legalism of the Jews. Luther also was engaged in the same effort in his attack against salvation by works, which threatened to undo the church in the sixteenth century. Bonhoeffer explains his apprehensions in his letter. "The Pauline question whether circumcision is a condition of justification seems to me in present-day terms to be whether religion is a condition of salvation. Freedom from circumcision is also freedom from religion."⁷⁵

For him, religion is a space on the border of human existence reserved for God. He claims that religious people speak of God when human perception is (often just from laziness) at an end, or human resources fail. Bonhoeffer rejects the idea of a God who fills the gaps. He objects to the use of God as a Deus ex machina. This he did in all his theological work, and this is the concern of his Ethics as an ethics of the cross. An ethics of the cross, for Bonhoeffer, is an ethics

74) Ethics, p. 280

75) Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 281.

which distinguishes Law and Gospel. He makes distinctions between the penultimate and the ultimate, Law and Gospel, the world and God: and yet he knows that there are not two realities but only one, and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world. As one who knows the difference between Law and Gospel and the unity of the one God who gives reality to both, Bonhoeffer stands in the same line as Paul and Luther. But by seeing God's claim in the context of a world come of age in which men have to live as if there were no God, Bonhoeffer addressed the task in a fresh way opening up the possibility of stating the ethics of the cross for our age with precision and passion.

As Godsey indicates truly, "the most impressive thing about Dietrich Bonhoeffer is the way in which his own life provides the commentary on his theology. He lived close to God and out of the depth of involvement and he learned the secret of freedom"⁷⁶

Now we must deal with a very difficult and delicate problem, that is the problem of his deep involvement in a movement to assassinate Hitler. Through this investigation, it seems to me that both the contributions and the limitations of Bonhoeffer's Ethics will be brought

76) Godsey: The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 281.

to light.

There are not a few people among Christians, especially Church figures in West Germany since the War, who have interpreted Bonhoeffer's involvement in the resistance as a purely political decision, based on political motives. Consequently they refuse to call Bonhoeffer a "martyr" of the present day in the original sense of the New Testament Greek word "martus", meaning the "witness" to Christ. No one who knows Bonhoeffer well can agree with such a position. He was beyond and before all else a pastor, a minister of the Word of God. He saw in the erratic temper of his nation a dilemma which was, at root, moral; and he could not, for all that his theological and traditional background discouraged him, ignore his responsibility. In this sense, we believe, Bonhoeffer will be remembered as a great martyr who died for the witness of Christian faith in this century.

Bonhoeffer, however, clearly took the position of non-violence in the early years. We can confirm it by looking at his devotion to Mahatma Gandhi. Bonhoeffer was very much interested in Gandhi and had a long-standing idea of going to India. Although he was already interested in Gandhi's personality and work in his student years at Tuebingen, his fascination for India and Gandhi grew more and more as the years went by.

He attempted to go to India three times altogether, in 1928, 1931 and 1934. At that time, such an idea was regarded as thoroughly eccentric. Having heard of Bonhoeffer's intention in 1936, even Karl Barth wrote: "Strange news that you intend to go to India so as to learn some kind of spiritual technique from Gandhi or some other holy man and that you expect great things of its application in the West."⁷⁷

For Bonhoeffer it was a sincerely and urgently motivated idea. From London he wrote to his grandmother in May 1934:

Before I tie myself down anywhere for good, I am thinking again of going to India. I have given a good deal of thought lately to Indian questions and believe that there is quite a lot to be learnt there. Sometimes it even seems to me that there is more Christianity in their 'paganism' than in the whole of our Reich Church. Of course, Christianity did come from the East originally, but it has been so Westernized and so permeated by civilized thought that, as we can now see, it is almost lost to us... I might go to Rabindranath Tagore's university. But I'd much rather go to Gandhi and already have some very good introductions from close friends of his. I might be able to stay there for six months or more as a guest... I shall go in the winter.
(78)

It is obvious that one motivations of his strong desire to see Gandhi was to learn his method of non-violent resistance, which Gandhi himself experimented

77) Gesammelte Schriften, Band II, p. 288.

78) op. cit., Band II, p. 182.

with along the lines of the Sermon on the Mount. That was why Bonhoeffer emphasized so much the Sermon on the Mount at his own "ashram", the Preacher's Seminary, which he finally chose to go to instead of the Mahatma's ashram.

To be sure, Bonhoeffer's preoccupation with the Sermon on the Mount arose not in relation to Gandhi alone. It was deeply related to his own spiritual growth and experience, the inner revolution by which "the theologian becomes a Christian" to use Eberhard Bethge's phrase.⁷⁹ After he made up his mind to take up the post of director of the Preacher's Seminary, he wrote in January 1935, to his brother:

The restoration of the Church must surely come from a new kind of monasticism, having nothing in common with the old but a life of uncompromising adherence to the Sermon on the Mount in the following of Christ. I believe the time has come to gather men together for this. (80)

Six months later he began this task at Finkwenwalde, from which his great book Nachfolge (The Cost of Discipleship) had appeared. As is well known, much of this book is cast in the form of an exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. Throughout the whole book, the influence of Gandhian non-violence is quite clear.

79) E. Bethge: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, pp. 153-156.

80) Gesammelte Schriften, Band III, p. 25.

For example, Bonhoeffer said in his comment on "Blessed are the peacemakers":

The followers of Jesus have been called to peace. ... But now they are told that they must not only have peace but make it. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult. (81)

On "Love your enemies":

The preceding commandment had spoken only of the passive endurance of evil; here Jesus goes further and bids us not only to bear with evil and the evil person patiently, not only to refrain from treating him as he treats us, but actively to engage in heart-felt love toward him. (82)

In the summer of 1934, when he attended the Youth Conference at Fanö, a Swede asked him "What would you do, sir, if war broke out?" His reply was, "I pray that God will give me the strength not to take up arms."⁸³ In his Nachfolge which was published at the end of 1937, he wrote:

The brother's life is a divine ordinance, and God alone has power over life and death. There is no place for the murderer among the people of God. The judgement he passes on others falls on the murderer himself. In this context 'brother' means more than 'fellow-Christian': for the follower of Jesus there can be no limit as to who is his neighbour, except as his Lord decides. He is forbidden to commit murder under pain of divine judgement. (84)

As widely known, through the kind offices of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Lehmann Bonhoeffer was in-

81) The Cost of Discipleship, p. 102.

82) op. cit., p. 133.

83) E. Bethge: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 314.

84) The Cost of Discipleship, pp. 115-116.

vited to the United States of America. With Niebuhr's formal invitation, Hitler's government granted Bonhoeffer leave "for at least the next two or three years." On 7th June, 1939, he set sail from Southampton, leaving behind him a continent already tense with expectation of the coming explosion. However, only ten days after his arrival, Bonhoeffer wrote to Reinhold Niebuhr from the country house of the President of Union Theological Seminary:

Sitting here in Dr. Coffin's garden, I have had the time to think and to pray about my situation and that of my nation and to have God's will for me clarified. I have come to the conclusion that I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I shall have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people. My brothers in the Confessing Synod wanted me to go. They may have been right in urging me to do so; but I was wrong in going. Such a decision each man must make for himself. Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose; but I cannot make that choice in security. (85)

Bonhoeffer knew what a return to Germany would entail: a stunted ministry, a sure prison term for refusing enlistment, and possibly death. His decision to return to Germany, therefore, marked his commitment

85) Bonhoeffer: The Way to Freedom, p. 244.

to the German future, a commitment which would lead, eventually, to the attempt on Hitler's life and to Bonhoeffer's own death. It may be right to say with William Kuhns that "he (Bonhoeffer) had a vague idea what lay ahead -- an underground ministry, the elemental struggle to survive as a conscientious Christian through the upheaval of the War. But at this point he hardly anticipated the defiant resistance activity or the fate it would bring. Bonhoeffer felt only the instinctive assurance that he belonged in Germany."⁸⁶

He arrived in Germany in late July, 1939 and on 1st September, German troops invaded Poland. The decision to enter resistance work was a slow one, dictated as much by Bonhoeffer's growing disillusionment with personal pacifism as by the events and men with which he became involved. Hitler's aggressive arm was sweeping Europe, and ultimate victory seemed imminent. At an ecumenical meeting in 1941 in Geneva, he admitted, "I pray for the defeat of my fatherland. Only through a defeat can we atone for the terrible crimes which have been committed against Europe and the world."⁸⁷ The situation required him not only to pray but also to join the resistance.

86) W. Kuhns: In Pursuit of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 109.

87) T. Prittie: Germans against Hitler, p. 124.

It was in 1940 when his "double life" began, namely the pastor's engagement in the political underground movement. In the spring of 1942, Bonhoeffer went to Norway as an emissary with Helmuth von Moltke. It was reported of their discussion during that journey that while Moltke refused to take part in removing Hitler by violence, Bonhoeffer pleaded the need for assassination. Later, after the arrest, he told his fellow-prisoner that it was his duty, as a pastor, not only to comfort the victims of the man who drove in a busy street like a maniac, but also to try to stop him. Bonhoeffer remained, in all his resistance work, a theologian and a pastor.

As a matter of fact, Bonhoeffer had thought of the possibility of such action already in the early 1930s. In his speech on "The Church and the Jewish Question" delivered in April 1933, he spoke of three possible tasks of the Church. The first is to ask the State whether its action is legitimate political action; the second is service on behalf of the victims of political action; and the third is "not only to bind up the victims beneath the wheel, but also to put a spoke in that wheel."⁸⁸ The third task is direct political action by the Church, to be taken only when the State ceases to function as a State with law and

88) Gesammelte Schriften, Band II, p. 48.

order. In other words, the third task is the extraordinary action to be taken in a "boundary situation" (Grenzfall). When Bonhoeffer decided to take part in the conspiratorial assassination of Hitler, he judged the situation of Nazi Germany to be nothing but a "boundary situation." He believed that it was his responsibility and task as a Christian and a pastor to remove that situation even by violence. Such a view of responsibility is clearly seen in his manuscript of Ethics written between 1940 and 1943 during which he was engaged in the plot. As an example, he wrote in the section "the Acceptance of Guilt":

From what has just been said it emerges that the structure of responsible action includes both readiness to accept guilt and freedom.

When we once more turn our attention to the origin of all responsibility it becomes clear to us what we are to understand by acceptance of guilt. Jesus is not concerned with the proclamation and realization of new ethical ideals; He is not concerned with Himself being good (Matt. 19: 17); He is concerned solely with love for the real man. ... As one who acts responsibly in the historical existence of men Jesus becomes guilty. It must be emphasized that it is solely His love which makes Him incur guilt. ... Jesus took upon Himself the guilt of all men, and for that reason every man who acts responsibly becomes guilty. If any man tries to escape guilt in responsibility he detaches himself from the ultimate reality of human existence, and what is more he cuts himself off from the redeeming mystery of Christ's bearing guilt without sin and he has no share in the divine justification which lies upon this event. ... Through Jesus Christ it becomes an essential part of responsible action that the man who is without sin loves selflessly and for that reason incurs guilt. (89)

89) Ethics, p. 209-210.

Because of his love and responsibility for those who became the victims of Hitler, Bonhoeffer dared to incur guilt. Further more, because of an abnormal "boundary situation," he decided to take extraordinary action, namely violence.

Bonhoeffer had considered a lengthy and elaborate work on Christian ethics since the closing of Finkenwalde in 1937. However, he was not able to devote time to it until 1940. He wrote most of the work over the next three years in various places: at his parents' home in Berlin; in the Benedictine Abbey of Ettal in Upper Bavaria, where he lived for several months as a V-man (a civilian employee of the Military Intelligence) working in Muenich; and at the summer estate of a friend, Frau Ruth von Kleist-Retzow, in Pomerania. When he began writing, the conviction grew that Ethics was the beginning of his real life work in the short time that remained to him. In the letter to Bethge from the Tegel prison on 15th December, 1943, he wrote "I think I really have my life more or less behind me now and that all that would remain for me to do would be to finish my Ethics."⁹⁰

90) Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 163.

It is apparent why Bonhoeffer would consider this his major work -- or the beginning of his real life work. No previous works are marked with the daring, almost rash originality of the Ethics; none are ambitious in the mature and consciously theological way this work is. The understanding of Church and world which Bonhoeffer seeks in the work proceeds with a full awareness of Christ's presence in the Church, and of His formative action upon the members of the Church. Yet Bonhoeffer, as before, could not illuminate the overpowering action of Christ upon the world without providing a profound understanding of the world's own existence.⁹¹

The effect is a delicate tension, throughout the Ethics, between the supernatural and the natural, or between the ultimate and the penultimate. Within this tension he is able to come to grips with what is fundamentally a new understanding of the Church-- no longer in terms of a static pattern, or even a theologically defined "nature," but of an existential mission.

The Church is nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has really taken form. What we have here is utterly and completely the form of Jesus Christ and not some other form side by side with Him. The Church is the man in Christ, incarnate, sentenced and awakened to new life.

91) cf. W. Kuhns: In Pursuit of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 117.

In the first instance, therefore, she has essentially nothing whatever to do with the so-called religious functions of man, but with the whole man in his existence in the world with all its implications. (92)

Such a radical orientation towards the Church in terms of the mission to the world does not stop there; Bonhoeffer continues to erect upon this Church-world doctrine his notion of ethics, one highly geared to "conformation" into Christ, and highly relative in its expression in different situations in the world. In as much as there is a basic ethical principle, the conclusive moral demand is for conscious responsibility, not naively to one's own "Christian calling," which begs the question, but to the world, where Christ carried out His responsibility.

It must be admitted that the structural development of these steps is hardly clear in the present, incomplete volume of Bonhoeffer's Ethics.

Bonhoeffer's book did not progress chapter by chapter in accordance with a fixed and unalterable plan. Each one grew gradually by the coalescence of numerous separate studies of the subject until it formed a whole. The titles and the arrangement of the book were subject to constant change in the course of this process. (93)

92) Ethics, p. 64.

93) Bethge: "Preface to Ethics" in Ethics, p. 12.

The gap between the Ethics Bonhoeffer intended and the fragmented work he has left behind is no doubt a great one. In the present Ethics, four stages of development are present, with each stage illuminating a new probing and a new foothold; clearly Bonhoeffer was working towards a realization he never made, except sketchily in the letters from the prison. It is appropriate, unfortunately, that Bethge defines Bonhoeffer's Ethics as "an absolute fragment".

Nevertheless the Ethics remains with little doubt Bonhoeffer's most substantial and perhaps most theologically significant work. "If no carefully etched pattern controls the book, an inner unity rises out of Bonhoeffer's gripping consciousness of a kernel idea and his awareness of its impact on all Christian life."⁹⁴ Because of this inner unity Bonhoeffer's Ethics is still a worthy guiding star for us today.

94) W. Kuhns: In Pursuit of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 119.

CHAPTER FIVE

BONHOEFFER'S IMPORTANCE FOR THE CHURCH IN JAPAN

As I have already mentioned, the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer has been famous in Japan since the beginning of the 1960's. In those days the selected works of Bonhoeffer which consist of nine volumes were issued in a Japanese translation. This publication, needless to say, has expedited the wide interest in him among ministers, theologians and laymen. The first appearance of his name in our country goes way back to October, 1950¹ and selected translations from his Letters and Papers from Prison had begun to appear in a periodical in 1955.²

Bonhoeffer himself, however, had shown his concern for the church in Japan a long time ago. In 1940, he wrote these comments about Japan in his Ethics.

It is only in the Christian west that it is possible to speak of a historical heritage. Certainly there are also traditions in Asia and they are much older than ours, but they share in the timelessness of Asiatic existence, and even in Japan, where the western way of existence has been most fully accepted, history still retains a mythological character. The first article of the present-day (1940) Japanese constitution prescribes belief in the descent of the Emperor or Tenno from the sun-god. The concept of historical inheritance, which is linked with the consciousness of temporality and opposed to all mythologization, is possible only where thought is consciously or unconsciously governed by the entry of God into history at a definite place and a definite point of time, that is to say,

1) In a small monthly magazine Kyodai (Brother), no. 16, October, 1950.

2) Fukuin to Sekai (Gospel and World), January, 1955-December, 1955.

by the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. (3)

At that time he simply mentioned that the Japanese constitution requires the nation to worship the Emperor. Bonhoeffer, however, clearly criticized the church in Japan in his study on the Ten Commandments which was written in Tegel prison in 1944.

The majority of Christians in Japan have recently declared that participation in the state emperor cult is permitted. In all decisions of this nature the following points are to be considered: (1) When participation in such acts of the state is demanded, is it clearly a matter of the worship of other gods? If it is, then refusal is the clear obligation of Christians. (2) If there is doubt about whether it is a religious or a political act, then the decision will depend on whether by a Christian's participation in it, the church of Christ and the world are offended, that is, if by participation at least the appearance of a denial of Jesus Christ is given. If this is not the case according to the common judgement of the Christians, then nothing stands in the way of participation. But if it is the case, then here also participation will have to be refused. (4)

After the Second World War we Christians in Japan found that we had to give our approval to this criticism of Bonhoeffer. As the result, in some sense, a study on Bonhoeffer in Japan must work back to the inner substance of this understanding and practice. And it is our task, therefore, to answer to his challenge.

3) Ethics, p. 69.

4) J. Godsey: Preface to Bonhoeffer, pp. 58-59.

Since the beginning of the 1960's, not only the translation of Bonhoeffer's works but also a large number of articles or theses on Bonhoeffer which intend to introduce his thought and life or interpret his theological thinking have been published. The substantial arguments were discussed and fundamental research was developed. Unfortunately, however, most of this work is partial and makes clear only a part of Bonhoeffer's thought and action. Among such tendencies, the publication of "Fukujuh to Teikoh eno Michi"⁵ (The Way to Obedience and Resistance) written by Heita Mori in 1964 is worthy of being noted. This is the only Japanese literature which is listed in the worldwide comprehensive bibliography on Bonhoeffer by Ernst Feil, at the end of his book "Theologie Dietrich Bonhoeffers", 1971.

This biographical study on Bonhoeffer appeared three years before the publication of Eberhard Bethge's voluminous work of over a thousand pages titled "Eine Biographie Dietrich Bonhoeffers: Theologe, Christ, Zeitgenosse" (1967, Chr. Kaiser Verlag, München). It is said that this work is an epochmaking one among Japanese researches which were treading the path of fragmentary interpretation of and introduction to Bonhoeffer.

5) Heita Mori: Fukujuh to Teikoh eno Michi, 1964, p.349.

Thenceforwards many substantial studies have appeared in Germany and other European countries, including: J. Godsey: The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Diss. Basel, 1958); J. A. Phillips: The Form of Christ in the World (1964); H. Ott: Wirklichkeit und Glaube. Erster Band: Zum Theologischen Erbe Dietrich Bonhoeffers (1966); J. Weissbach: Christologie und Ethik bei Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1966); E. Bethge: Eine Biographie Dietrich Bonhoeffers: Theologe, Christ, Zeitgenosse (1967); R. G. Smith ed.: World Come of Age (1967); A. Dumas: Une théologie de la réalité: Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1968) R. Mayer: Christuswirklichkeit (1969); E. Feil: Theologie Dietrich Bonhoeffers (1971); T. R. Peters: Die Praesenz des Politisches in der Theologie Dietrich Bonhoeffers (1976).

In Japan, however, a contribution which surpasses Heita Mori is still awaited. Moreover, unfortunately, it cannot be denied that there are still certain tendencies to risk using Bonhoeffer carelessly without an earnest effort to get a fundamental understanding or to distort his thinking, which leads to many misleading notions about him circulating among the Japanese. A careful research into Bonhoeffer's thought is therefore still of value. At the end of 1978, the Bonhoeffer Committee of Japan which is connected with Internationales Bonhoeffer-Komitee was organized. The time of trans-

lation and introduction is over. There is now an urgent need to accumulate sound researches and make a wider and deeper study in our country.

Such research must start from an understanding of the different ways in which Bonhoeffer's theological thinking has been received in Japan.

The first has concentration on Bonhoeffer as a politically committed Christian. As mentioned above, "Fukujuh to Teikoh eno Michi" (The Way to Obedience and Resistance) written by Mori is a monumental work among studies on Bonhoeffer in Japan. It makes clear the meaning of Bonhoeffer's theology and practice in a political and social situation of that time. It also describes impressively enough how Bonhoeffer had lived and died as a member of the conspiracy in the dark age of the Hitler regime. Mori describes his purpose and intention in writing in a postscript:

While inquiring into Bonhoeffer's life and struggle, the problem of the responsibility of the churches in Japan towards politics, especially the problem of the Christian peace movement in Japan was ever present in my mind. Today, all Christians in Japan are severely challenged about their own ecclesiastical and political attitudes. It is my earnest desire that this book will do something to answer this severe question. (6)

It is clear that the matter of primary concern at that time was how Christians should build up the church

6) H. Mori: Fukujuh to Teikoh eno Michi, p. 349. The translation is mine.

and participate in political affairs. They paid much attention to Bonhoeffer as a martyr against the Nazis when many Japanese Christian, with a few exceptions, took an equivocal attitude towards the militaristic government during the Second World War. With a deep feeling of repentance, Bonhoeffer's thought and life was widely accepted. In connection with this tendency, severe criticism was directed at the leaders of the Church of Christ in Japan during the war time.

It could be said that since Christianity has been a minority power in Japan, Christians have been anxious to live without any serious mistakes. In the past Christianity worked mainly in the limited field of personal piety.

Now, however, a cry for reform of the church arose and social concerns were promoted in the Christian world. Such a new trend was brought to fruition in a "Confession of Responsibility During the Second World War" which was issued on Easter Sunday 26th March, 1967 in the name of the moderator Masahisa Suzuki with the approval of the executive committee of the Church of Christ in Japan. This confession corresponds to the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt (Stuttgarter Schuldbekenntnis) which was issued at the time of the establishment of the Evangelical Church in Germany (E. K. D.) in October, 1945. At this point, it must be noted that all the signers of the

Stuttgarter Schuldbekennntnis, including Dr M. Niemoeller, were members of the Confessing Church and resisters against Hitler's Nazi regime. In other words, the German church began her activities in the post war days by confessing her guilt and errors, even though some members had fought against Hitler's tyranny and some of them had been imprisoned for that reason.

However, the church in Japan, in spite of her compromising attitude towards the militaristic absolute government in war time, could not draw a definite line between pre-war and post-war. For the churches made a desperate effort to increase the numbers in their congregations, taking advantage of the so-called Christian boom in post-war period. It was more than twenty years later that the church in Japan awakened to her failures.

Nevertheless, the proclamation of this Confession of Responsibility could be counted as one of the most effective event in the post-war history of the United Church of Christ in Japan. The whole text of the Confession is as follows:

The 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) was celebrated during the 14th General Assembly of the Kyodan held in October, 1966, at Osaka, Japan. Now, we are faced with the serious task of building the Kyodan. In order to express our sense of responsibility which the Kyodan has toward Japan and the world we prayerfully take as our theme "OUR CHURCH-TOMORROW".

At this time we are reminded of the mistakes committed in the name of the Kyodan during World

War II. Therefore, we seek the mercy of our Lord and the forgiveness of our fellow men.

At the time of the founding of the Kyodan the Japanese Government then under pressure asked that all religious bodies be brought together and that they cooperate with the national policy to bring the war to a victorious end.

Since the time that the Gospel was first presented in the early part of the Meiji Era, Japanese Christians had desired to establish one evangelical Church in Japan, by the merging of denominations. Therefore, they entered into the Union and the Kyodan was established taking advantage of an order of the government.

Concerning this founding and the continued existence of the Kyodan we recognize, with deep fear and gratitude, that, even in our failures and errors, the Providence of God, "The Lord of History," was at work.

The Church, as "the light of the world" and as "the salt of the earth," should not have aligned itself with the militaristic purpose of the government. Rather on the basis of our love for her, and by the standard of our Christian conscience, we should have more correctly criticized the policies of our mother land. However, we made a statement at home and abroad in the name of the Kyodan that we approved of and supported the war, and we prayed for victory.

Indeed, as our nation committed errors we, as a Church, sinned with her. We neglected to perform our mission as a "watchman". Now, with deep pain in our heart we confess this sin, seeking the forgiveness of our Lord, and from the churches and our brothers and sisters of the world, and in particular of Asian countries, and from the people of our own country.

More than 20 years have passed since the war, and we are filled with anxiety, for our mother land seems unable to decide the course that we should follow; we are concerned lest she move in an undesirable direction due to the many pressures of today's turbulent problems. At this moment so that the Kyodan can correctly accomplish its mission in Japan and the world we seek God's help and guidance. In this way we look forward to tomorrow with humble determination.

MASAHISA SUZUKI
Moderator

The contents of this Confession undoubtedly reminds us of Bonhoeffer's "The Confession of Guilt" in the Ethics, part of which reads as follows:

The Church confesses that she has not proclaimed often and clearly enough her message of the one God who has revealed Himself for all times in Jesus Christ and who suffers no other gods beside Himself. She confesses her timidity, her evasiveness, her dangerous concessions. She has often been untrue to her office of guardianship and to her office of comfort. And through this she has often denied to the outcast and to the despised the compassion which she owes them. She was silent when she should have cried out because the blood of the innocent was crying aloud to heaven. She has failed to speak the right word in the right way and at the right time. She has not resisted to the uttermost the apostasy of faith, and she has brought upon herself the guilt of the godlessness of the masses.

... By her own silence she has rendered herself guilty of the decline in responsible action, in bravery in the defence of a cause, and in willingness to suffer for what is known to be right. She bears the guilt of the defection of the governing authority from Christ. (7)

According to Bethge's investigation, this part, which is the second part of four fresh starts of his ethical thinking, was written in autumn 1940 on the estate at Klein-Kroessin (Kieckow).⁸ It means that Bonhoeffer wrote this passage on the confession of the guilt of the Church when Hitler had achieved his most surprising victory over France and his popularity in Germany was at its height. It was his insight that the

7) Ethics, pp. 92-94.

8) E. Bethge: "Preface to the Rearranged Sixth German Edition", Ethics, pp. xii-xiii.

Church can become the real Church only through formation in His likeness (Gleichgestaltung) by bearing and confessing the guilt of the world in the midst of this historical world.

It might not be unreasonable to recognize Bonhoeffer's influence upon the 'Confession of Responsibility During the Second World War'. Indeed, it would be better to say that Bonhoeffer's life and thought, which have had wide influence among Japanese Christians, induced the people to awaken to their failures in war time and guided them to the confession.

The announcement of the Confession, however, created a sensation among the churches in Japan. It was welcomed by those who depart from a parallelism of church and society and intend to assume the social responsibility of a Christian who lives in this world on the one hand, and it was opposed by those who defend the evangelical tradition and devote themselves to church activities on the other hand. For fear of a schism of Kyodan, a committee of five members was organized which tried to settle the situation. As the result, the focus of the matter became ambiguous and the real question was withdrawn from sincere consideration.

The second type of reception of Bonhoeffer is seen in the trend towards interpretation from the standpoint of secularization.

Bonhoeffer's name was often quoted as a theologian who defended the movement of modernization or secularization. While the first group took a warm interest in how Bonhoeffer carried through his fight against Nazism, the second group showed their concern to learn how Bonhoeffer's theology answers to the question of how we should understand the Gospel and preaching for this modernized age.

We can find one example in this statement.

Modernization rather means a non-religious way of living. Because in the modern society, the claim is to assert oneself with religious authority or to maintain the relative as the absolute.

The German theologian Bonhoeffer, who was executed because of his engagement in the resistance movement against the Nazis, wrote in his letters from prison as follows: "To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to make something of oneself (a sinner, a penitent, or a saint) on the basis of some method or other, but to be a man -- not a type of man, but the man that Christ creates in us." (Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 361)

Modernization could be supported by such a man who is not above nor under the man. (9)

Bonhoeffer's idea of "the world come of age", of "non-religious interpretation", was used as a powerful weapon to proclaim the Gospel to the secular modern society. His understanding of the worldliness of Christianity was used to soften the feeling of estrangement of modern people towards religion. But it could be said here also that Bonhoeffer's theological thinking was understood only from the point of methodological concern.

9) Y. Kumazawa: Asu no Shingaku to Kyokai (Theology and Church Tomorrow), p. 45. The translation is mine.

The theology of Bonhoeffer, needless to say, is closely connected with the situation of the world. It has been produced from his actual life in history. It is not abstract but concrete. However, his theology should not be understood simply as one which defends the so-called secularization of the world.

In 1930 Bonhoeffer went to New York to study at Union Theological Seminary. During a stay in the United States of only nine months he had an "encounter", so to speak, with the Black Church. Since a Black friend at Union, whose name was Frank Fisher, took him to visit the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, almost every Sunday he attended that church and became a regular worker in the Sunday school and the various club activities of the church. It was and is still now a rather rare case that a foreign student should participate regularly in a Black church's life and activity. That was, however, what Bonhoeffer had done. One of the reasons why he went to the Black church may be his critical view of the white churches.

One may hear sermons in New York about almost any subject; only one is never or very seldom heard: namely the Gospel of Jesus Christ, of the cross, of sin and forgiveness, of death and life.
(10)

10) Gesammelte Schriften, Band I, pp. 94f. Quoted from Y. Furuya: "Bonhoeffer and King", Humanities, 1973, p. 3.

This might be one reason why he called the church in America "Protestantism without Reformation".

Bonhoeffer found a great joy in the Black church.

This personal contact with the Negroes was for me one of the most pleasing and significant event of my America visit. ...

First of all, I heard the Gospel preached in the Negro church. Here one could truly hear about sin and grace, love to God and final hope spoken in a Christian way. (11)

Bonhoeffer called the Black church the only "Proletarian Church" in the United States and had a deep concern about the Negro problem.

He had an interest in the proletariat even before his coming to the United States. He wrote in his dissertation (1927), which was published under the title of "Sanctorum Communio" (1930), as follows:

On my view it cannot be gainsaid that the future and the hope for our 'bourgeois' church lies in a renewal of its life-blood, which is only possible if the church succeeds in winning the proletariat. If the church does not see this, then it will spurn a moment of the most serious decision. (12)

Since he had already such a view on the church and the proletariat from the beginning of his career as a theologian, he became immediately interested in the Black church in the United States and could identify

11) Gesammelte Schriften, Band I, p. 97.

12) Sanctorum Communio, p. 275.

himself with it. Paul Lehmann, his best American friend, recalled later,

What was so impressive was the way in which he pursued the understanding of the problem to its minutest detail through books and countless visits to Harlem, through participation in Negro youth work, but even more through a remarkable kind of identity with the Negro community, so that he was received there as though he had never been an outsider at all. (13)

Having returned to Germany, and while he was lecturing at Berlin University, he worked for and lived with proletarian boys in Wedding, the most deprived district in Berlin. Although the ministry he sought in the overcrowded slums of east Berlin did not materialize, he was ready to go there instead of to the university. His desire for working with the proletariat was genuine and lasted even in prison.

It is true that Bonhoeffer understood the modernized world positively and wished to live in and for that world.

Here, the discussion of 'the ultimate and the penultimate' should be remembered. For Bonhoeffer 'the ultimate' and 'the penultimate' are inseparable. He insists:

For the sake of the ultimate the penultimate must be preserved. Any arbitrary destruction of the penultimate will do serious injury to the

13) P. Lehmann: B. B. C. talk, 13th March, 1960. Quoted by E. Bethge: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 114.

ultimate. If, for example, a human life is deprived of the conditions which are proper to it, then the justification of such a life by grace and faith, if it is not rendered impossible, is at least seriously impeded. (14)

The penultimate is, therefore, not unimportant but must be regarded as necessary. He himself positively engaged in the penultimate things. It does not, however, mean that he affirms the secular world without due consideration. In this context these statements which are found in his report of his second visit to America entitled "Protestantism without Reformation" written in August, 1939, must be noted.

The freedom of the church is not where it has possibilities, but only where the Gospel really and in its own power makes room for itself on earth, even and precisely when no such possibilities are offered to it. The essential freedom of the church is not a gift of the world to the church, but the freedom of the Word of God itself to gain a hearing. Freedom of the church is not an unbounded number of possibilities: it only exists where a 'must', a necessity, on occasion compels it against all possibilities. The praise of freedom as the possibility for existence given by the world to the church can stem precisely from an agreement entered upon with this world in which the true freedom of the Word of God is surrendered. Thus it can happen that a church which boasts of its freedom as a possibility offered to it by the world slips back into the world to a special degree, that a church which is free in this way becomes secularised more quickly than a church which does not possess freedom as possibility. (15)

14) Ethics, p. 111.

15) No Rusty Swords, p. 100.

In other words, whether a church is really free or not depends upon whether the Word of God is actually preached or not. So he went on to say;

Whether the churches of God are really free can only be decided by the actual preaching of the Word of God. Only where this word can be preached concretely, in the midst of historical reality, in judgement, command, forgiveness of sinners and liberation from all human institutions is there freedom of the church. But where thanks for institutional freedom must be rendered by the sacrifice of freedom of preaching, the church is in chains, even if it believes itself to be free.
(16)

Bonhoeffer's idea of a 'world come of age' or 'non-religious interpretation' should be understood theologically and not methodologically or politically. Consequently we cannot deny that Bonhoeffer has not been understood properly in the church of Japan.

The third type of reception can be seen in rather conservative attitudes. The most popular book among Bonhoeffer's works in Japan is "Life Together" (Gemeinsames Leben, 1939). Four different translations have already been published. This shows that his theology is introduced and read as the theology of the formation of the church in some sense.

Through his whole life, Bonhoeffer certainly intended to work for the formation of the church. From the

16) No Rusty Swords, p. 101.

beginning his theological concerns were directed to the problem of the church. His first two works, Sanctorum Communio and Akt und Sein, revolve around the concept of the church. He was a minister just as much as a theologian.

Unfortunately, however, it has been understood by the third group that his thinking stands out in sharp contrast to that accepted by the second group. This means that his theology has been accepted as extremely internal. Christianity is placed only in the sphere of the personal, the inner and the private. The concern is mainly for the self-preservation of the church.

This is merely an instance:

The Christian church can fulfil her essential service to the world by concentrating on carrying through what an Arkandisziplin aims at. (17)

In Bonhoeffer's thinking, the ideas of the worldliness of Christianity and of the Arkandisziplin (a secret discipline), both hold an important position. Bonhoeffer connects this notion of an Arkandisziplin which would preserve the mysteries of the Christian faith from profanation with his thoughts about the ultimate and the penultimate. In contrast to the visible, worldly life of the Christian in the realm of the "things before the last", there must be a hidden, disciplined life of

17) T. Katoh: Fukuinshugi Kyokai Keisei no Kadai (The Task of the Formation of the Evangelical Church), p. 24. Translation is mine.

devotion and prayer that is grounded in belief in the "last things". These form the dialectical relations of Christian existence, the worldly life always requiring the nourishment of the secret discipline and the Arkan-disziplin always sending a man back into the secular world.

This dialectical relation has not functioned sufficiently, and the ultimate concern has been emphasized onesidedly in this group. As the result the notion of an Arkandisziplin could not be understood in a way which meets with Bonhoeffer's primary intention, and was used simply as a type of church asceticism.

In Bonhoeffer the second and third type should supplement each other, however their relation was accepted as coexistent or opposite in Japanese church. The first reason why this parallelism has taken place in this country can be seen in the fact that the task of the church in Japan which was shown in the first type and was presented by Bonhoeffer himself was not taken up as a problem seriously in both the second and the third type.

The second reason can be seen in a tendency to treat Bonhoeffer's theology as an answer and not as a question. The church in Japan should be mutually faced with the problem or task of the church in company with him. However, she has changed the question which Bonhoeffer

raised to an answer of her own, through interpreting his theology as a leading mark of the manner in which the Japanese church can overcome the failure of the church in prewar times, or the church can proclaim the Gospel to modern world, and the church can grow up in these days. As the result the dialectical relation was lost sight of, and the church remained only in the realm of the religious world.

Recently, even some distorted criticism or some kind of an agitation for the exclusion of Bonhoeffer's theology has appeared in Japan. Those who take the critical position against Bonhoeffer call his idea of "non-religionisation" so to speak, in question. They insist that the church should assume the form of religion and it is her aim not to pursue the way of non-religionisation but the way of real religionisation. And they regard the thought of "the church for others" or "non-religionisation", which they insist that those are the representative ideas of his theology, as rather dangerous. They are afraid of whether he has replaced the theology of redemption by one of social liberation. One of the typical examples of this type of criticism could be seen in the following sentences;

Non-religionisation of Christianity changes its vertical relation to God to a horizontal relation to the neighbours. As long as the vertical relation is kept, the so-called religious realm comes into existence. Bonhoeffer, however, has

dissolved this religious realm by changing the vertical relation to the horizontal one. He has changed the relation to God into the relation to the neighbours. (18)

However, this does not do justice to Bonhoeffer's intention. It is not his idea but the idea of the so-called theology of liberalism. So we may say that it is unfair to criticize him in such a way. He insisted that the divided realms of the horizontal and the vertical are in truth inseparable and must remain so. It is true that Bethge, his good friend, defends him saying;

Bonhoeffer never induced anyone to adapt himself to the false spirit of the age, the Zeitgeist. What Bonhoeffer has left us is rich because he teaches us to keep a balance in thinking, in teaching and in acting so that doing the just thing keeps prayers from destruction and vice versa. (19)

In this connection, it might be right to examine his motif by quoting his original sentence. The idea of a non-religious world or a non-religious interpretation appeared in his later years. He wrote a letter in May, 1944 from Tegel prison to Renate and Eberhard Bethge when they baptized their first child who was Bonhoeffer's godson. This text is entitled "Thoughts on the Day of the Baptism of Dietrich Wilhelm Ruediger Bethge". The concluding section reads as follows:

18) T. Satoh: Shuhkyoh no Soshitsu to Kaifuku (On the Forfeiture of Religion and its Reconstruction), p. 183. Translation is mine.

19) E. Bethge: Prayer and Righteous Action, p. 26.

Today you will be baptized a Christian. All those great ancient words of the Christian proclamation will be spoken over you, and the command of Jesus Christ to baptize will be carried out on you, without your knowing anything about it. But we are once again being driven right back to the beginnings of our understanding. Reconciliation and redemption, regeneration and the Holy Spirit, love of our enemies, cross and resurrection, life in Christ and Christian discipleship -- all these things are so difficult and so remote that we hardly venture any more to speak of them. In the traditional words and acts we suspect that there may be something quite new and revolutionary, though we cannot as yet grasp or express it. That is our own fault. Our church, which has been fighting in these years only for its self-preservation, as though that were an end in itself, is incapable of taking the word of reconciliation and redemption to mankind and the world. Our earlier words are therefore bound to lose their force and cease, and our being Christians today will be limited to two things: prayer and righteous action among men. All Christian thinking, speaking, and organizing must be born anew out of this prayer and action. By the time you have grown up, the church's form will have changed greatly. We are not yet out of the melting-pot, and any attempt to help the church prematurely to a new expansion of its organization will merely delay its conversion and purification. It is not for us to prophesy the day (though the day will come) when men will once more be called so to utter the word of God that the world will be changed and renewed by it. It will be a new language, perhaps quite non-religious, but liberating and redeeming -- as was Jesus' language; it will shock people and yet overcome them by its power; it will be the language of a new righteousness and truth, proclaiming God's peace with men and the coming of his kingdom. 'They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it' (Jer. 33:9). Till then the Christian cause will be a silent and hidden affair, but there will be those who pray and do right and wait for God's own time. May you be one of them, and may it be said of you one day, 'The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter till full day' (Prov. 4:18) (20)

We also find these phrases which have been quoted again and again:

When we speak of God in a 'non-religious' way, we must speak of him in such a way that the godlessness of the world is not in some way concealed, but rather revealed, and thus exposed to an unexpected light. The world that has come of age is more godless. and perhaps for that very reason nearer to God, than the world before its coming of age. (21)

It is Bonhoeffer's intention to unite the vertical and the horizontal firmly together. We should not misunderstand Bonhoeffer by imagining that in the realization of his worldly interpretation there would no longer be any community gathered for worship, so that the Word, the Sacrament and the community could be simply replaced by caritas. What he criticizes is an attitude of the church that is carried away for its self-preservation, as though that is an end itself, because such a church cannot say the word of reconciliation and redemption to mankind and the world.

On that conviction he insisted that our being Christians today will be limited to two things: praying and doing the just thing among men on the one hand, and on the other hand that Christians are called to proclaim the Word of God by a new language that is quite non-religious, but liberating and redeeming -- as was Jesus's language; it will shock people and yet overcome them by

21) Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 362.

its power. In him, praying and doing the just thing interpret and correct each other. Prayer protects righteous action from being subordinated to this world, and righteous action protects prayer from being simply an escape to a self-satisfied inner world. It reminds us of his famous word written in The Cost of Discipleship: "Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes". This tension must be considered in order to understand Bonhoeffer's thought and life correctly.

For him the most important thing is the presence of Christ, not how to show him to the world. In order to let the actual relationship to Christ be present, asking the question of "Who is Christ for us today?" must not be forgotten. This is where we have statements about silence and invisibility, about the way in which the just man prays and acts, and about the difference between the ultimate and the penultimate. (22)

Bonhoeffer once confessed "what is bothering me incessantly is the question what Christianity really is, or indeed who Christ really is, for us today?"²³ The question "who is Christ" is the key to understanding

22) E. Bethge: Bonhoeffer, p. 784.

23) Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 279.

Bonhoeffer's theology. Every problem must be thought through and interpreted starting from this question. It seems to me that there has been a certain tendency to give too much attention to Bonhoeffer asking 'how' questions -- Wie Frage, so to speak, especially in the church in Japan. It is important, however, to keep our eyes upon 'who' questions -- Wer Frage, in company with Bonhoeffer, and to live as a Christian in the world here and now. Because from questioning who Christ really is, we could find a new relation to God and the neighbours. The separation of faith and act or Gospel and law would be overcome. A true reception of Bonhoeffer could be started actually from this point.

We must now turn to undertake a survey of the legacy of Bonhoeffer's Ethics and seek the way which the church in Japan should take in the future.

Since the sixteenth century Reformation, we have always seen some kind of separation between faith and act or God's grace and man's behaviour in the Protestant Church. It is a phenomenon unfortunately spread all over the world.

In Germany it could not be denied that this tendency has been influenced by Luther's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, the kingdom of the church, which is ruled by the preached word of God, and the kingdom of the world, which is ruled by the sword: the realm of the spiritual

office and the realm of secular government. The corpus christianum is resolved into its true constituents, the corpus christi and the world. In His Church Christ rules not by the sword but solely with His word.

In Japan, Protestant Christianity has a history of over one hundred years. Almost twenty years have passed since the centennial celebration of the beginning of Protestant missions in Japan. Nevertheless, the number of Christians was and is still very small, less than one percent of the whole population. The fact that the Christians of this country have been always a minority group produces an attitude of self-preservation. The church in Japan has been obliged to remain in the realm of the spiritual and internal affairs and to make the utmost efforts to preserve and enlarge herself. It is true that she has had an increasing interest in social problems since the Second World War. The church has begun to shoulder her social responsibilities and many Christians have been aware of the necessity of their openness to the world. In the nineteen sixties and seventies the church of Japan has been faced with many difficult problems. One of the most severe troubles was the antagonism between so-called evangelical group and the social group. As I have mentioned at the beginning of this paper,²⁴ a careful investigation is in order, as an

24) See Introduction.

attempt to throw some light on these problems. This is always of great importance to the church everywhere, but especially relevant in view of the situation of the church in Japan. What can we learn from Bonhoeffer?

Following up the line of Bonhoeffer's ethical thinking, we cannot but fully realize the realism or concreteness of his thought.

It is difficult to deny the great importance of his thoughts for the modern world in spite of their fragmentary form. This might be partly due to the fascinating directness of his language. And also his theology was conceived not in a study, on a study desk, in safety, but in the midst of doing good and praying in the time of crisis, in that uninterpreted incognito, in that acceptance of the reduction of his existence as a minister of religion.

It seems to me that Bethge has understood Bonhoeffer's intention correctly in his discussion on freedom when he writes as follows:

In practice this concept of freedom meant that Bonhoeffer would no longer make the claim for the universality of Christian faith, nor assert the priority of being Christian over being German. Nor would his concern be a theology and ethic for all the world. This freedom now meant the particularity of being voluntarily bound into unreserved partnership with his own country as it ran headlong into destruction; it meant solidarity with his own class as its members either desperately fought for survival by cooperating with evil or prepared its downfall by underground action; it meant solidarity with his church, silent and

guilt-laden, an unwitting accomplice of unspeakable crimes. (25)

Bonhoeffer's ethics is really an ethics for Christians in his particular world, grounded in a faith in the given presence of Christ. The integrity of his relations to the realities around him is a major significance of his ethic. In that sense, it seems to me that we can call his ethic a "Christocentric theologically responsible ethic".

It has long been maintained in discussion that only the Christian as an individual led by his personal conscience can decide in politics, whereas neither the Christians as a group nor the church are able to do so. The church can do no more than respect the individual member's own decision. The minister's task, in the field of politics, would be to sharpen the conscience of the congregation. However, if this principle were strictly followed, the church could say nothing but admonish each member to be conscientious.

The church's course of so-called neutrality was disquieting for Bonhoeffer already in 1932, before National Socialism came to power. He demanded that the church should proclaim the word concretely and venture to speak up for truth when truth tends to be forgotten. In a letter of 25th December, 1932, he

25) E. Bethge: "Freedom and Obedience in Dietrich Bonhoeffer", Prayer and Righteous Action, pp. 61-62.

complains that "our church today is unable to speak the concrete commandment".²⁶ The word which is Christ who is present in the church is concrete enough to be heard not only by individuals but also by the congregation and even by a people as commanding with certainty.

It is his thinking that we live in a reality which is different from the ideology of individualism. He insisted that we should search for God's commandment in our life in history.

... God makes His commandment heard in a definite historical form. We cannot now escape the question where and in what historical form God makes His commandment known. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, and even at the risk of a direct misunderstanding, we will begin by answering this question in the form of a thesis. God's commandment, which is manifested in Jesus Christ, comes to us in the Church, in the family, in labour and in government. (27)

In this context, we must take up the problem of what does 'history' mean and how do the life of an individual and history affect each other? In the decision of Bonhoeffer to return to Germany from the United States in 1939 we can find the form of his conviction. Needless to say, it was very dangerous not to stay in the United States when war was imminent in Europe. Returning to Germany meant almost a suicidal

26) Gesammelte Schriften, Band I, pp. 63f.

27) Ethics, p. 245.

act. Considering the rights and duties of an individual, his decision cannot be justified. Bonhoeffer, however, was convinced that he ought to participate in the destiny and guilt of his people. Therefore he made up his mind to live where he belonged, through the course of events both during the war and, hopefully, afterwards when the time would have come for a new beginning. Solidarity means for the Christian to stand in for the others' guilt and liabilities. The church asks for God's will to be done. Therefore he insisted the church must take the risk to speak of the word concretely, and that not to do so will mean guilt. As has been mentioned previously, in 1940, when Hitler was at the summit of his power, Bonhoeffer wrote a confession of guilt including the church's offence against the Jews.

The Church confesses that she has witnessed the lawless application of brutal force, the physical and spiritual suffering of countless innocent people, oppression, hatred and murder, and that she has not raised her voice on behalf of the victims and has not found ways to hasten to their aid. She is guilty of the deaths of the weakest and most defenceless brothers of Jesus Christ. (28)

It is clear that he was thinking of the problem of the Jews in these comments. However, the Stuttgart Confession of 1945 did not mention the Holocaust, so to

28) Ethics, p. 93.

speak, as if nobody had seen this biggest violation of the dignity of mankind in German history. The Stuttgart Confession must be judged as an actual historical event which produced a powerful influence on the churches not only in Germany but also in all parts of the world. On the other hand, Bonhoeffer's confession in his Ethics did not receive any living response from an individual or from the church. However, the Stuttgart Confession was followed by restoration of the status quo ante, while Bonhoeffer's confession led to action for the future.

Bonhoeffer understood history as a theological, especially a christological, concept. History is the reality in which Jesus Christ bound himself to humankind, accepting their guilt. Consequently, whoever lives in history as a human being is meant to live in relation with others. Hereupon the problem of responsibility becomes our issue, because responsibility is realized when we become aware of being connected with others.

It is difficult to find answers on many issues which haunt us today in Bonhoeffer's fragmentary and unfinished Ethics. For example he did not take up the problems of human liberties, human rights or human sciences. We could not say he was an ardent or experienced democrat. However, Bonhoeffer certainly bequeathed to us some profound paragraphs on the foundations and direction for

the inner unity of the mature and responsible Christian who lives and acts in manifold levels of involvement.

He showed the Christian the dynamic this-worldliness of Christ's humanity, judgement and renewal. As one is drawn into the form of Christ, one is always in the process of being judged, renewed and humanized; the incompatible contradictions of Christian existence become a living, united reality: freedom and commitment; the authority of Christ's commands and the autonomy of free, personal decision; being directed from without and being liberated to mature self-realization. (29)

For Bonhoeffer then, it is the task of Christian ethics to show the "structures of responsible life". The idea of "responsibility" becomes the centre where all Bonhoeffer's ethical efforts finally focussed.

In the section entitled "The Structure of Responsible Life", he maintains as follows:

Obedience without freedom is slavery; freedom without obedience is arbitrary self-will. Obedience restrains freedom; and freedom ennobles obedience. Obedience binds the creature to the Creator, and freedom enables the creature to stand before the Creator as one who is made in His image. Obedience shows man that he must allow himself to be told what is good and what God requires of him (Micah 6:8); and liberty enables him to do good himself...

In responsibility both obedience and freedom are realized. Responsibility implies tension between obedience and freedom. There would be no more responsibility if either were made independent of the other. Responsible action is subject to obligation, and yet it is creative. ...

29) E. Bethge: "Freedom and Obedience in Dietrich Bonhoeffer", Prayer and Righteous Action, p. 66.

The man of responsibility stands between obligation and freedom; he must dare to act under obligation and in freedom; yet he finds his justification neither in his obligation nor in his freedom but solely in Him who has put him in this (humanly impossible) situation and who requires this deed of him. The responsible man delivers up himself and his deed to God. (30)

For Bonhoeffer, therefore, it is equally absurd if freedom means an absolute autonomy on the one hand and obedience means an absolute heteronomy on the other hand. These two absolutes lead to self-destruction as Bonhoeffer himself experienced at that time. If freedom and obedience are only abstract and isolated principles, they are irrelevant to living, speaking and responding people in their historical context and structures. Bethge presumes that about the time when Bonhoeffer began to write a chapter on "The Structure of Responsible Life", he arrived at the highlight of this ethics of responsibility.³¹

In this chapter he sets out his conviction that when the person is confronted by the challenges of an extraordinary situation, he cannot hide behind legality. He may and must decide completely on his own, confessing at the same time that valid law is broken by the necessary risk. An ethics of responsibility is unable

30) Ethics, pp. 220-221.

31) See E. Bethge: An gegebenen Ort. Aufsätze und Reden 1970-1979, pp. 63-82.

to promise that a certain decision will be completely right. One is never sure beforehand, or on principle. In responsible action, the wish to know for sure what ought to be done is abandoned. Responsibility means, for Bonhoeffer, to risk taking decisions and to depend firmly on grace.

His ethics of responsibility is, therefore, simultaneously christological and highly descriptive of his own conspiratorial participation. He begins this chapter with these words:

The structure of responsible life is conditioned by two factors; life is bound to man and to God and a man's own life is free. It is the fact that life is bound to man and to God which sets life in the freedom of a man's own life. Without this bond and without this freedom there is no responsibility. Only when it has become selfless in this obligation does a life stand in the freedom of a man's truly own life and action. (32)

Responsible action should not be confused with arbitrary action. Bonhoeffer was deeply conscious that there will be severe judgement on all we do. We must try as hard as possible to find out the best possible option. Our conscience warns us not to get entangled in guilt.

Bonhoeffer then develops the four basis elements of responsible life in this chapter. They look like the characteristics of 'man come of age' which he described in his Letters and Papers from Prison. The

32) Ethics, p. 194.

four elements are (1) deputyship, (2) correspondence with reality, (3) the acceptance of guilt, (4) the venture of concrete decision, with its element of risk.

Bethge explains the contents as follows:

The mature person no longer (1) evades what he has to do for others, nor does he (2) dream about concrete conditions, prices and ethical validities of success or failure; (3) he does not hide from his broken and guilt-laden past, but is free to accept this and to accept the claims of the present and the future; and (4) he does not wait for an unattainable certainty before he acts. All this constitutes his mature freedom and commitment which comes to life in responsibility. (33)

His motif could be expressed by using Paul's famous words in Galatians chapter five.

Christ set us free, to be free men. Stand firm, then, and refuse to be tied to the yoke of slavery again.

You, my friends, were called to be free man; only do not turn your freedom into licence for your lower nature, but servants to one another in love. (NEB)

Bonhoeffer was precisely the one who lived both free from and free for. He was free from everything and at the same time free to be bounded for others. He was a free believer and a lover of the commandment. He lived in freedom and commitment and thus lived as a bearer of responsibility.

This seminal chapter of the Ethics also, like other chapters, remained unfinished. The last paragraph,

33) E. Bethge: "Freedom and Obedience in Dietrich Bonhoeffer", Prayer and Righteous Action. p. 68.

however, ends in impressive description and it contains Bonhoeffer's unintentional autobiography about his last years.

Whether an action arises from responsibility or from cynicism is shown only by whether or not the objective guilt of the violation of the law is recognized and acknowledged, and by whether or not, precisely in this violation, the law is hallowed. It is in this way that the will of God is hallowed in the deed which arises from freedom. But since this is a deed which arises from freedom, man is not torn asunder in deadly conflict, but in certainty and in unity with himself he can dare to hallow the law truly even by breaking it. (34)

The life and death of this twentieth-century martyr points out the task which is given to the Church not only of Germany but of Japan and of the whole world today. At the same time, he calls every Christian to deep repentance, to faith in God's promise, and to the steps towards responsible life.

When the history of the Japanese Church, which has but recently entered its second century of mission, is set in the perspective of the twenty centuries of world Christian history, it becomes clear that the Japanese Church is still in her pioneer period. She is required to serve the historical world with a pioneer spirit. She should not pour all her energies into maintaining herself, and establishing a small, in-grown, self-satisfied clique. The Church becomes the real Church only when

34) Ethics, p. 229.

she is bound to God and man, and dedicates herself to the Gospel and the others. The Japanese church, in spite of her small number, must be a creative minority, like a mustard-seed (Mt. 13:31).

Repeating various trials and errors, the church in Japan is now aiming at the renewal of herself. It seems to me that we can see some flash of hope in the recent activities in the church. For example, the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan), which is the main body among the Protestant churches, organized three special committees recently.

The Japan-Korea Relations Committee has helped raise the consciousness of the denial of basic human rights not only in Korea, but in other Asian countries as well. They took the lead in a joint Symposium on Human Rights and Japan's Involvement in Asia which considered the church's role in this whole area of concern, both in Japan and abroad.

The Committee on the Buraku Discrimination Issue has gained the General Assembly's approval for the establishment of a centre to strengthen the movement towards buraku liberation, which is one of the most complicated social problems in Japan, concerning the liberation of the discriminated against and outcast communities, and also involvement with other human rights issues in Japan.

The Committee on the Yasukuni Shrine Issue has entered a new phase in which attempts to nationalize the shrine are now centring on a grassroots movement led by the same forces seeking the revival of militarism and the Emperor system. Christians are taking the lead in opposing these forces.

As Bonhoeffer incessantly asked the question "Who is Christ for us today?", the Church in Japan should live and serve Him wrestling with the fundamental question "Who is Christ for us today in the historical situation of Japan?"

It might be appropriate to quote the remarks of Eberhard Bethge, who is the best friend, the most suitable introducer and the pre-eminent successor of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as the concluding words of this survey.

Hitler was only one of our problems. What had made him possible, is the really fundamental issue. And this issue is not one that has simply disappeared. It remains with us always. That is why we need to remember figures like Bonhoeffer.
(35)

35) E. Bethge: "The Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer", Prayer and Righteous Action, p. 43.

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